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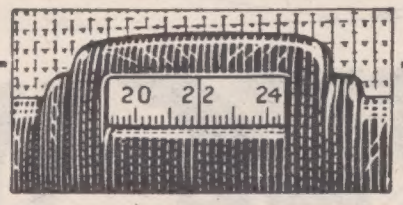

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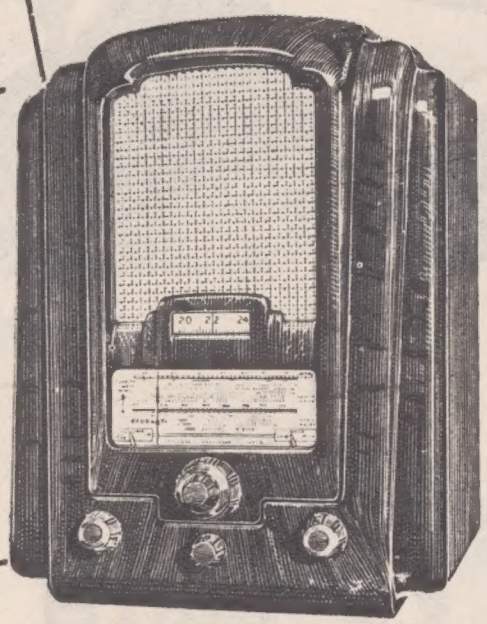

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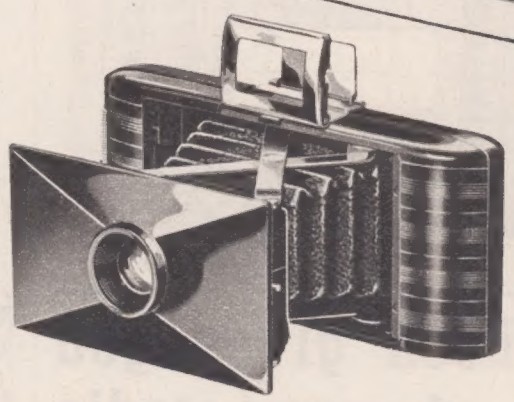

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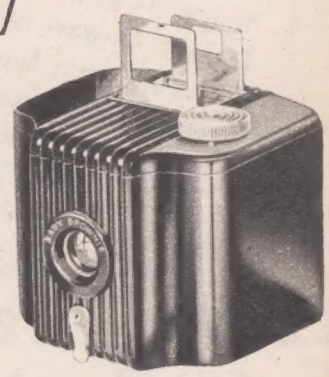

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by Kathleen Norris

—"Oh, Dad, my French is practically perfect, except that a few months in Paris would polish me off!"

"Parlay Voo, Marie?"

"I ASK you—I *implore* you, to get me out of this place!" the girl said, angry tears on her lashes.

"I wish you'd get it through your head once and for all that I won't!" the man answered on a sudden burst of harshness.

Mary Leavenworth looked at him a moment in stunned amazement. Never in all the years had he used that tone to her before.

"What's the matter with this place?" the man presently asked sulkily.

"Simply that it's hell," Mary answered briefly and coldly.

Richard Leavenworth looked at her for a few moments of silence, as she came to fling herself into the chair opposite his, and, fumbling in her blouse pocket for a handkerchief, burst into tears.

"You say that about every place I put you," he observed.

"Well, but you only put me in horrible places, Dad!" Mary countered on a sob.

"That's nonsense! I've had you in three of the most expensive schools in the world."

"Take me home!" Mary suggested brilliantly. She perceived that she had made some little headway with him, and she hastened to take advantage of it.

"It's a bachelor's establishment, Mary. A girl of eighteen doesn't fit into a place like that. My guests are all men. I often have business dinners that last well into the night. You'd be alone all day."

"You could get me a companion."

"Not after Miss Ingalls!" the man said fervently, and there was a brief silence.

"Why not try it, Dad? After the holidays. Why not try it, and, if it worked, then I wouldn't have to go to that holiday camp again this year. I could stay here in New York with you."

"Next year, Mary. When you're nineteen we'll take a place down on Long Island and you can entertain for me. This year—if this French deal goes through—I may have to start off for Paris at a moment's notice."

"Oh, Dad, but you could take me with you! I've never been abroad; I've never been anywhere except in Grandma's old mausoleum of a house and in school and in camps! Think of the fun we'd have! I could practise my French, and run around the ship playing quoits and races and things, and dance, and have dresses to wear to dinner——"

He was hardly listening to her; one phrase in her eager rush of words had arrested his attention. He interrupted her with a question.

"French, now? How much French do you speak, Mary?"

"Oh, Dad, I'm practically perfect, except that a few months—or weeks, maybe, in Paris," Mary tactfully amended it, watching his face, "would polish me off!"

"How many years have you studied French?"

"About ten, I should think. Since I was quite a kid. You'd be surprised how I can gabble away in conversation class."

"I suppose," her father said, a speculative eye upon her, "you couldn't understand business phrases—interpret, as it were?"

"Oh, Father!" Mary gasped ecstatically as he paused. "Just give me a chance! Just watch me!"

"I wonder—if—you—might," he said, long pauses between the words.

"Well, but of course! That's what a finishing school *does* for you, Dad! Oh! Dad, is there any chance—d'you mean you might really? Oh, I'd get out my phrase books and go to it like mad!" Mary babbled, in his lap now, with her arms locked about his neck.

"It would have the advantage of secrecy, at all events," her father said.

"What would?" Mary asked alertly, eager to understand.

"This French business," he answered, rubbing his head in perplexity. "De Crouvert is the man who is coming over from Paris to talk it all over; he gets here in about three weeks. Pemberton, our San Francisco man, arrives to-morrow. If I could take Pemberton with me to France it would all be fine, but he doesn't speak French; and the point is that if any of this leaks out, Mary, we not only lose the biggest contract we've had since 'twenty-nine, but we might even get in wrong with the French Government. It's all got to be handled with the utmost delicacy. I was thinking," he went on, as Mary merely listened respectfully, eyeing him in expectant silence. "I was thinking that you might come in darned useful there," he said, rubbing his chin.

"With my French! You *know* you could trust *me*," Mary said.

"With your French, yes. That, too. But my reason for going to Paris might be explained that way. Taking my daughter over to a French school, d'you see? No business significance to the trip at all. That might work out," Richard Leavenworth mused, thinking aloud.

"Even if this Vicomte de Crouvert went along with us nobody'd suspect anything. They're sending a man who's not identified with the business. They're as anxious as we are to keep the whole thing quiet until it's settled. He's got a sister here, married to an American named Bernheim; ostensibly he's just coming over to see her and her babies."

"Oh, Dad, what a grand time I'd have with him! I mean, translating papers and having him at the house and all that."

"Why, you don't know him yet, Mary. He's probably thirty-five; he'll think of you as a little girl."

"About thirty-five and a vicomte!" Mary exclaimed. "Oh, he's perfect! Dad, will you tell him I'm twenty-four? Just at the start, you know, so he won't think I'm a complete boob? Does he speak any English at all?"

"Not one word. I should think," Mary's father said, still reasoning with himself, "I should *think* that with a dictionary and a little time you might do it. No, he doesn't speak any English. Ordinarily they'd pick some clerk or agent to send over. But this matter is so important that his father, who is a silent partner in the company, wrote me expressly that he would send his son, and I could be responsible for getting a trustworthy interpreter. I've been feeling my way about to get the right man for two months; there must be such a feller somewhere! You don't know of anyone, I suppose, who could handle it? Your professor at school, eh?"

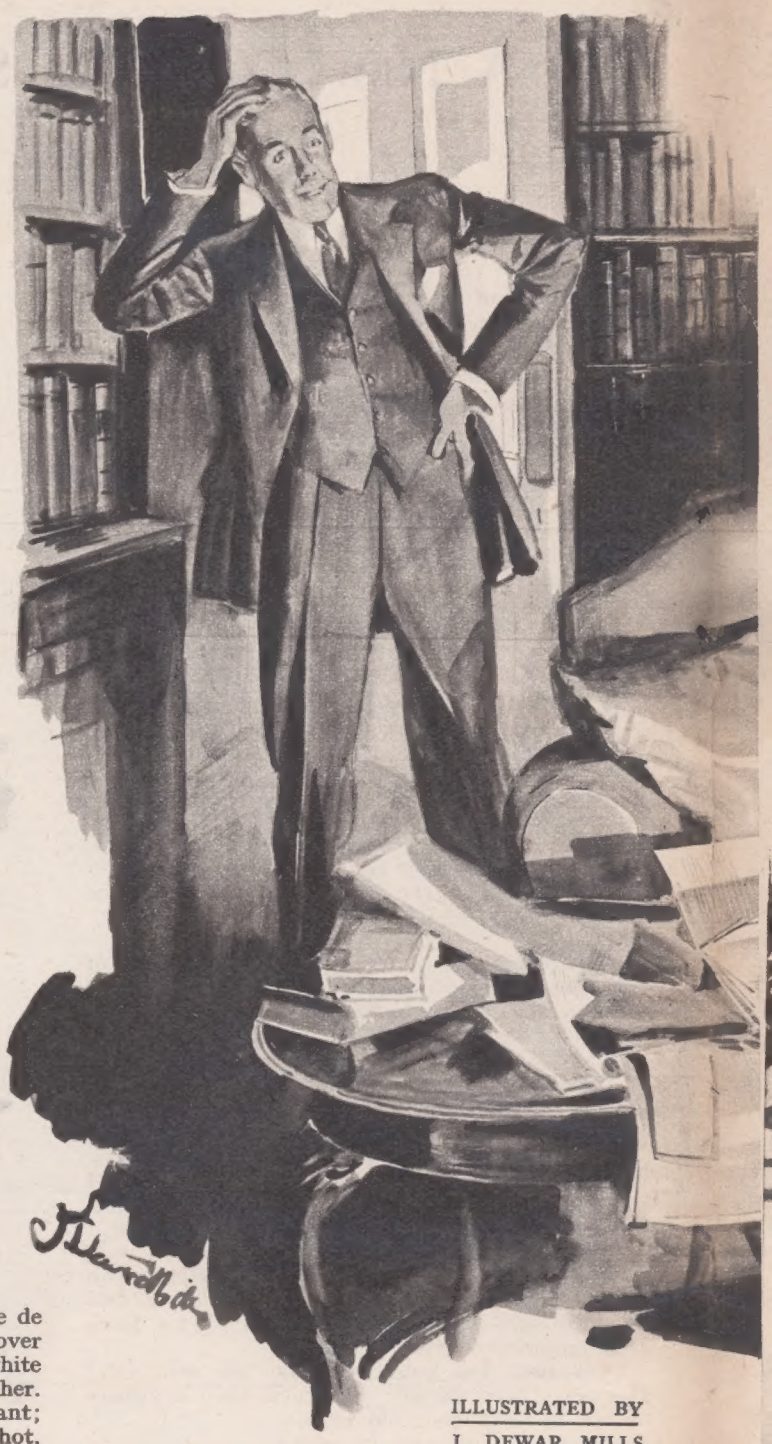
"Old Dog Tray," Mary said firmly, "is with one exception the most repulsive human being I ever knew. The exception is her assistant, Fräulein Splotz."

"Old Dog Tray?"

"Madame Yvonne Celeste Trait, our French teacher."

(*continued on next page*)

CONTINUING *"Parlay Voo, Marie?"*



ILLUSTRATED BY
J. DEWAR MILLS

"Ha! But now supposing, dear, that this Frenchman arrives here in a week or two. He visits his sister—I meet him there at dinner and he dines with me. Now, supposing you were there, fell into a perfectly natural conversation, you and I and Pemberton and the Frenchman could get away with a few questions and answers, I suppose?"

"Jean would hear it all, Dad. Would that matter?"

"The butler, eh? So he would. That's a smart thing to have thought of, Mary. We could get rid of Jean that week—give him a holiday and have old Mamie in the dining-room."

"Old Mamie's the girl for us."

"Well, we'll arrange that. Now let me see how this goes. We have our dinner talk. A day or two later de Crouvert slips down to the Wall Street office and we go over some files. That's all. That week you and I sail for Paris, and the Vicomte happens to be on board."

"Dad, if you could know how the skies are opening for *me*! Life is worth living. I can't believe it."

"You'll remember that this is absolutely secret, Mary?"

"Absolutely!"

"You see the Bullock people are right on our trail. They know something's up, but they don't know how it's going to break. They're watching. An Englishman came over here a while ago to talk to me about exchange privileges in the clubs; they had him followed.

"They may know all about this Crouvert—his father's a very important man over there. What we're banking on is that they don't know his father's in this. They may be on to the whole thing. We're taking that chance. He's supposed to be visiting his sister; I know her. I met him in her house. This business of your getting to a school may work out very well. I like it, but you keep your mouth shut."

"I'll be an absolute oyster!" Mary promised. "The—the talk at dinner would be more or less—not business; it'd be social wouldn't it?" she asked.

"Oh, entirely social. That would be just breaking the ice. At the end I'd invite him down casually to take a look at Wall Street. It'd be the office meeting that might be hard for you. Simple enough phrases, you know, but now and then a technical word. Not a word of this, now; and, meanwhile, you can tell any one you like that I may take you abroad."

"Try me!" Mary said confidently. She kissed him good-bye as she never had kissed him before, floated back into the dull atmosphere of school like a creature with wings.

Later she went in all sweetness and youth and good manners into the French teacher's lair.

"Madame, it is possible that my father will take me to the city of Paris this approaching summer, and naturally I desire to improve my French, the French of me. Will you—will you—if you please will you——oh, darn it!" said Mary, changing languages abruptly, and laughing, "How do I say I'd like to coach like mad from now on?"

"You can say that in French, Mademoiselle."

"Certainly. But—but it is so difficult—I am so stupid——"

"Would your father wish the regular help, or special lessons?"

"Oh, special lessons! One a day."

"One a *day*?" Madame echoed, on a rising inflection. The high fees for special lessons went to her private purse. "Well, my little one, we will see what will arrange itself," she added, in satisfaction. She reached for books. "Shall we commence to-day?" she asked.

"Please," said Mary.

"Mary, you'll have a chance to try out your French to-night," her father told her a week later.

Mary, dressed in new splendour for the first formal dinner of her life, felt an interior chill.

"Oh, I thought the Vicomte wasn't going to get here until next week, Dad?"

"He isn't. But Mrs. Blaney is here, and she's brought a very nice young fellow from the Consulate. He's perfectly charming, she tells me, but he doesn't speak a word of English, and he's rather lonely. Marian's in Virginia with Nelson and Ellen, and Mrs. Blaney brought him along."

"He doesn't know—he isn't to know anything about our business, Dad?"

"Lord, no! You never heard of Vicomte de Crouvert. You never heard of anything. No, it's just that he's French, and I thought it might be good practice for you."

"It will be," Mary said slowly, with a bright, forced smile. In her ears rang some of the sentences that Old Dog Tray had only this afternoon obligingly said in English that her pupil might the better understand her.

"Marie Leavenverse, you ar're perhaps ze virst speakaire of Franche zat evaire I hear're," the desperate Yvonne Celeste Tray had assured her. "Zis vich you lear'rne to-day you forget to-mowwow! Zare is no *use*, ve cannot *do* it, it is vaste of your papa time and *money*; I geef you op!"

"You haven't told the old Frenchwoman at school anything about our plot?" her father was asking her.

"Oh, not a word, Dad. Nor anyone. I was wondering if this Frenchman of Mrs. Blaney's might be a spy for the Bullocks?"

"Anybody may be. But if he is, see that he doesn't get anything. Keep on the surface—keep impersonal. He comes from the Consulate; he ought to be straight, but by George, as the time comes near, Mary, I suspect everyone."

"Well, he'll get nothing from me," said Mary.

"I trust you," he said. "And I like you, too, Mary, d'you know that?" he added. "I felt—well, kind of glad, to-day, that you're mine, and that I could telephone the school and simply say I wanted my daughter home for dinner. I'm proud that you can sit down next to these foreigners and talk to 'em in their own tongues."

"I like you too, Dad," Mary said, bright tears in her eyes as she put her bare, sweet, young arms about his neck. "I wish I spoke French better," she added suddenly.

"Oh, it's not going to be as bad as you think it is, just because they didn't dare trust it to paper. Half an hour ought to do the office thing, and the rest we'll finish up on the boat, or on the other side. Ah!" Richard Leavenworth said, as the first of the guests arrived. "Here's Mollie; how are you, Mollie? And the Vicomte Duprez? Glad to meet you, sir. Sorry I don't speak French. My daughter, Miss Leavenworth."

"Mademoiselle," said Georges Francois Marie de Gresson Duprez. He bent his black head over Mary's hand; he smiled at her with even white teeth; he said that he was well charmed to see her. And Mary was a gone girl from that instant; enraptured, dizzied, bewildered, breathless, hot, cold, happy, frightened, gladder than she had ever been in her life about anything, fearful with a fear that blotted out every other emotion.

Oh, he was so handsome, so tall and dark and brown of skin and kind of eye, so military in bearing,so enchanting in modulations of voice! Oh, and he wore his flawless evening dress so easily, yet with such finish, and he had a monocle and just a touch of grey at his temples although he was hardly thirty.

"Talk French to him, Mary. My daughter speaks French," Richard Leavenworth said.

"A small little!" Mary said gallantly. The fine eyes of Georges brightened.

"Oh, but that's wonderful, and your pronunciation is marvellous!" he said. "You must have studied very hard!"

This left Mary completely in the dark. She said vaguely: "Ah, yes."

"Ask him if he plays golf," her father said, proud and confident beside her.

Was "to play" oser, jouer, courser, ravir, nagir? Mary was totally at a loss for a moment. Then she said smilingly:

"The golf? Is it that you like it?"

This provoked another gracious rush of words from the handsomest, the most romantic man she had ever seen, but it was heavy work, with her father at her elbow. If the Vicomte Duprez would only talk a little more clearly and slowly . . . !

"I have studied French for many years," she ventured, with a dashing air. Whether or not it fitted in with what he was saying didn't really matter. The important thing was to impress her father, and he was obviously impressed. The delightful Georges said something polite—was it just a shade puzzled, too? At all events she must rush on. She said with simple gravity: "You are already late, young ladies; let us begin the lesson immediately!"

Georges laughed at this so amazedly, and yet with such a heartening dawning of comprehension, too, that she was not surprised to have him guide her to a great leather davenport, where they could sit down, where they could not be overheard, and where he could investigate at his leisure the strange quality of French acquired after only ten years' application by the pupils of Miss Carstairs', Miss Deanborough's, Hazelrock Manor and the other several schools in which Mary Leavenworth had been enrolled since her mother's death.

He still talked French, of course; he had no English. But he talked slowly, clearly, enunciating each syllable, making what he said sound the way things sounded when Old Dog Tray said them. Mary took heart. If she could understand one French vicomte perhaps she could some day understand another; meanwhile she was having the most enthralling adventure of her life.

What was Vicomte Duprez' first name. Ah, he had many. Many? Ah, yes, that meant more than one—plenty—enough.

Oh, yes, of course she understood! Her name was Mary.

Marie, eh? The most beautiful name in the world. His name was Georges Francois, but he was called Gogo. What did Gogo mean? It did not mean anything; it was a little home name.

"Gogo. Oh, I love that, how sweet!" Mary thought she said smoothly. What she really said made the man flush a little and stiffen the muscles of his mouth, but he knew what she meant and they were immediately off again, he laughing at her

—Marie was speaking only in low monosyllables, but what she said was in French. "Wee, wee. Ah, wee . . ."

French, she eager to begin his English lessons. Now and then Mary glanced across the room to where the grown-ups were and caught her father's complacent glance. She returned it happily; she could go on forever talking to Gogo.

"It's nice that Mary speaks French," her father said, marshalling them out to dinner. "Mary, you take the Vicomte. Barney, you're on Mary's other side."

Mary beamed at Barney Pemberton; she had known him for years and she liked him. He was her father's closest business confidant and west coast representative. It was a relief, after the French, to talk to him.

Soup, fish, poultry, salad went by like a dream, and they were talking hard, she and Gogo.

"Really, a few days of this practice and I'd not be afraid of the Vicomte de Crouvert," Mary was beginning to think boldly, when the odious Mrs. Blaney attacked her from the other end of the table. Mary didn't like Kathryn Blaney because for two years she had been trying her best to marry Mary's father, and although he himself had no apprehensions on the subject, Mary knew that eventually he would do it. Otherwise Kathryn was pleasant enough, rich and handsome and all that.

"Mary," she said, "ask the Vicomte if he's free on Thursday, or if he has to go back to Washington, and if he does, if he will keep an eye on my sister's ten-years-old boy?"

A complete silence happened to have fallen on the twelve diners. There would always be an attentive and expectant silence in such a moment as this, Mary thought. Even the few French phrases she knew seemed to have deserted her; any word that came to her sounded wrong and crude and strangely detached from its neighbours. She turned to Gogo and spoke in a low quick tone, with a smile.

"Remi was a little French boy who lived at a farm with an old woman named Mère Barbarin," she said. "Remi had seven years. Mère Barbarin was not his mother."

Gogo, not batting an eyelash, answered her smoothly and swiftly.

"Vashintong?" she asked then, simply.

Ah, yes, Vashintong. He added a good deal to the word; Mary listened, turned regretfully toward Kathryn.

"He has to go to Washington," she said.

"What day, Mary?"

"What day, if you please?"

"Thursday."

"Thursday. Or is *Jeudi* Tuesday and *Mardi* Thursday?" Mary thought in a panic. Too late now; the general conversation had recommenced, and she and Gogo were left to their own labouring devices again.

"Oh, it's not so hard," said Mary.

The rest of the evening was all Paradise. She and Gogo talked and talked, laughing and stumbling and writing words on paper and laughing again. Gogo had been three weeks in America without caring much about learning to speak English, but now it appeared that he could not study it fast enough, and he and Mary presently made an engagement to meet every Saturday morning at the riding school for the triple purpose of taking a gallop in the park, following it with a really serious hour of English-French, and lunching either at home or in town, the latter point to be decided upon each occasion as their fancy dictated. Mary drifted off into happy sleep that night, trying to decide whether to wear her tweeds or the smart, new, white riding-coat on Saturday morning.

It was somewhat disquieting on the following day to have Old Dog Tray even less flattering than ever on the subject of her linguistic ability. Mary, still glowing with joy over last night's experience, confident that she really spoke French pretty well, and could get along in any ordinary conversation quite swimmingly, came to the coaching lesson only to encounter Madame Trait's stinging disillusionment.

"I hope Vicomte de Crouvert's business French won't be anything like this," Mary thought, listening to the outpouring of words only with an occasional syllable comprehensible. "Incredible," she always knew that one, and "nerves" and "fatigue," those were familiar. In a moment they would have reached Madame's headaches, and then she would have no trouble following along the Great War, the husband who had won the War Cross, and the fact that for the two remaining years of his life after the Armistice he had been blind.

"I should worry!" Mary reflected comfortably, going into town with little Miss Potter for a fitting of the riding habit. "If darling Gogo got the idea so easily, and played right up to my terrible bluff, why shouldn't this other Vicomte? All I have to do is speak low and fast and it doesn't matter what I say; I can look some of the words up afterwards and Dad'll never know the difference. I must hunt up 'contract' and 'signature' and a few other words like that; I'll do that this afternoon and have Gogo work them into some nice swift sentences for me. The darling!

"I wonder if what he said was that he was going down to Washington; he seemed to have no hesitation in dating himself up for Saturday morning." And to herself she repeated the words in which Gogo had drilled her last evening: "Will you speak more slowly? I cannot understand you when you speak so fast."

"Oh, I'll get along all right!" she reassured herself over and over again in the days that followed. They were the happiest days her motherless, somewhat lonely life had known so far. She rode with Gogo, and they talked French. She ordered new clothes with the great trip in mind: a delicious top-coat for the steamer, evening frocks, a beautiful cream crêpe for dinner, a velvet wrap with a white fur collar.

All the world was spring and glory and excitement; under the glory and excitement were only occasional twinges, twinges of uneasiness when she thought of the rapidly approaching arrival of the Vicomte de Crouvert, and of his first attack upon her as interpreter between him and her father. It might take her a few anxious minutes to win him, to have him courteously and smilingly accept her own peculiar brand of French as Gogo had.

"Daddy, we couldn't take Gogo into our confidence, could we?"

"Good heavens, Mary!" he said. "Have you said anything to him about it?"

"Oh, Dad, no. Of course not! I've not breathed it to anyone." Mary thought of her conversations with Gogo, their laboured "it makes fine weather to-day," and "thank you for the beautiful candy," and laughed deep inside. Her father need have no apprehensions as to her talks with Gogo!

"He's attached to the Consulate here, Mary. It might be *fatal* to give him the slightest hint," Richard said. "Does he know de Crouvert is coming over?"

"Yes, but only as if he were making a social visit, Dad. He said that he knew Mrs. Bernheim and that she was a Parisienne, and that her brother was coming over to see her children. That was all."

"Ah, well, that's all right!" said Richard, relieved. "But what good would Duprez do us?" he demanded.

"Well, because he speaks such beautiful French, Dad, and he could understand every word the Vicomte de Crouvert said."

"But he doesn't speak any English, Mary! You'd have to translate from him as well as from the other."

"Yes, I know. But I can understand Gogo now so much better than I probably will a strange man," Mary argued.

"Oh, don't you worry!" said her father, laughing. "I've listened to you jabbering away with Duprez and I assure you I'm amazed. You'll get through with flying colours."

"I think I will," Mary said stoutly.

"Let me go over this plan with you once again, dear. De Crouvert gets here on Wednesday."

"Wednesday?" Mary echoed faintly.

"He dines with us here on Wednesday night. Pemberton will be here; maybe one or two others. We've got to keep that dinner just social; of course

(*continued on next page*)

CONTINUING "*Parlay Voo, Marie?*"

he and I and Pemberton will know what it's all about, but there'll be no business that night. At the end he'll express an interest in our Wall Street, and I'll suggest—you can get that over to him for me—that he come down for a casual call on Thursday morning. Eleven o'clock, say."

"Wall Street eleven o'clock Thursday morning." Mary made rapid mental notes. "I'll manage *that*, anyway," she thought.

"Thursday night we all dine at the Bernheim's," her father was saying. "They're in Canada now, won't be home until Thursday afternoon, but he's going up to have a look at the children as soon as he gets in. It all works out pretty well, my taking him on until Bernheim gets back. I know Bernheim; I've played golf with him for years. Nothing in all that to put the Bullock people on to us, unless—*unless*," he said, half aloud, and shaking his head, "they've got some information from the other side!"

Mary listened bright-eyed. Her thoughts were not upon what her companion said. In perfect French she was saying to a man handsome and charming enough to be Gogo's older brother: "Daddy wants you to come down and take a look at our Wall Street to-morrow, and we'll all have lunch together."

"On Friday we'll run out into the country and lunch somewhere—Friday doesn't matter," Richard resumed. "And Friday night——"

He took out a new, smart, slender wallet and opened it, and Mary saw the strips of closely printed, ink-scribbled, greeny-white stiff paper, perforated into hinges, which no human eye perceives unthrilled.

"Tickets!" she breathed.

"Tickets. Suite A, reserved for Miss Leavenworth, who will be one of next season's debutantes."

"Friday night. That's only five da-a-a-ays!" she chanted.

She had a horrible moment of misgiving. Suppose she *didn't* get away with this gay little deception about her French; suppose she let Dad in to something that was all wrong? She put out a tentative feeler.

"Daddy, how much chance is there that if I missed on some little phrase, or some—some word I didn't know, you'd sign the wrong thing, or let yourself in for something?" she asked.

"Not much chance. It's really only formalities, *and* secrecy," he said, and Mary was reassured again.

The cream crêpe was reassuring, too. She put it on for dinner on Wednesday night, and descended the stairs to the drawing-room with her courage tremendously reinforced by its startling beauty.

Barney Pemberton and her father and Comte Henri Denis de Lignes de Crouvert were standing by the fire. They were having great difficulties with the language and laughing. Mary came forward; gold hair in shining tight curls on her neck, gold fringe coming down to bronzy eyebrows, heavy lashes curling back from blue eyes, tanned, firm, young skin as smooth as satin, and greeted the Vicomte on a rush of glib words.

Not anything like Gogo: a small, wizened vicomte this one, with a hooked nose, and eyeglasses on a ribbon, and with what frightful rapidity he spoke. He seemed a sharp, irritable sort of creature; he made Mary feel nervous at once. One couldn't attempt any innocent little joke about Remi or "Young ladies, you are already late" with this jerky, moustachioed, swarthy little man. Mary must stick to legitimate phrases and do the best she could.

She forgot Paris, and the trip, and the clothes. She only remembered with a pang at her heart that she was going to fail her father. Her father, whom she had hardly known for all the years of her life, whom she had come to love so deeply during these last weeks when they had laughed and plotted together.

Old Dog Tray had been absolutely right. She didn't know anything about French. It was madness, it was sheer folly for her to volunteer to interpret what this man was saying. She didn't get one word in ten, and as the faster he talked the less she got, and as he talked with impatient lightning-like rapidity, she was soon completely in the fog.

There was no laughing it off; no saving the situation. To Mary it was horrifyingly evident from the first; to her father and Barney it was becoming perfectly plain that there was no meeting of minds between Mary and the Vicomte.

Presently from the wreckage she extracted her life-saving phrase: "Will you speak more slowly? I cannot understand you when you speak so fast." She said it more than once.

He received it patiently. He repeated what he had to say. Her troubled eyes were fixed on his; she tried to read his expression, to win his co-operation with those little coaxing contractions of her blue eyes, those significant little pursings of her red lips that had so quickly subjugated Gogo. It was no use. He shrugged, he appealed in pantomime to the other men, with eloquently outspread hands. Mademoiselle simply did not speak French!

The nightmare, to Mary at least, seemed to last for hours, but after a while there was relief; other guests arrived. Gogo, of course, who fell instantly into easy talk with Vicomte de Crouvert, and little Mrs. Burney, who spoke French accurately and carefully, and with great delight.

"Mary, my dear, the Vicomte tells me you have been having difficulties! What do they teach you girls in all those years in school?" Alison Burney asked in amused affection.

"He said Mary couldn't speak French?" Richard asked quietly. Mary did not look at her father. The steamer tickets in his pocket, the new top-coat upstairs, the swish of the creamy crepe gown did not save her from the first stinging unendurable feeling of shame her life had ever known. Lessons wasted, money wasted, time wasted trying to make a cultured woman of her! And, worst of all, love and faith wasted. Her father had believed in her, and he had had that belief betrayed!

Sitting at the dinner table, smiling at Gogo on her left and Judge Harkness on her right, Mary felt ready to sink into the earth with sheer self-contempt. It washed over her like the drowning waters of a river; she couldn't bear it. Little Alison Burney could speak French. Everyone else could speak French except lazy, stupid, rich Mary Leavenworth.

After dinner they were going to play bridge, and Gogo had to go back to the Consulate on some special mission. Mary played bridge—they *did* teach you that at Carstairs—but she could not play for these stakes. There seemed to be no reason for her hanging around. Gogo had arranged that Vicomte de Crouvert should go down to Wall Street to-morrow at eleven. She needn't go, now; Dad would have to find someone else to whom to trust the secret business.

She drew him aside after dinner. The bridge-players were cutting for partners and places; Gogo was saying a smooth good-night to the other Frenchman; Mary could get her father to herself for a moment.

"Dad, I'm awfully sorry!"

He looked at her—the old, kindly, indifferent look that she had had for so many years.

"That's all right, Mary."

"I mean, I really thought I spoke French well enough to do it. I mean, I had no trouble with Gogo."

"Was that all genuine stuff you were talking to Gogo that first night?" Richard Leavenworth asked, simply enough, but with a shrewd glance that brought the hot colour into Mary's face.

"Yes, it was all French. Only—it was different. We were laughing; it was fun," she stammered.

"Well," said Richard wearily. "This, unfortunately, isn't all fun. I'll have to see who I can get to talk for us; it's damnably dangerous. But that's not your worry, my dear. You're not playing? Going to turn in, eh?"

"Yes, I'm going to bed." She trailed away disconsolately; there were tears in her eyes when she went slowly upstairs between the lights and flowers, and when she reached her room the crepe dress and Gogo's gardenias went down together on Mary's wide bed, and she cried for a long time as if her heart would break.

After that she pulled herself up and got into pyjamas and brushed her hair, and, glancing with withering hate at the little red French dictionary and the phrase book beside her bed, plumped up her pillows, got hold of a film magazine, and climbed into bed.

Time went by; it was almost midnight. No use trying to sleep with heart and mind in such utter feverish confusion; she must glue her eyes to the page and read on and on about this film star and that. Anything rather than stop, and begin thinking.

Suddenly she did stop, staring wildly into space for a moment, her mouth half-open, fingers at her lips. Then, with an audible gasp she was out of bed, across the floor, and had opened the hall door.

Hansen, her father's man, was at the top of the stairs murmuring with old Mamie, who always stayed up on dinner party nights to be sure the women got the right furs. Both had known Mary since babyhood; they were not entirely surprised to have her come flying out in night apparel, to hear her wild appeal. She *must* see her father. Hansen must go down immediately before the party broke up. He could say anything he liked, but he must bring Mr. Leavenworth upstairs, right now, this instant, and if Mr. Leavenworth wouldn't come Hansen might announce that in that case Miss Mary was coming downstairs in her pyjamas.

The Leavenworths sailed just a week later than they had planned. On the day before the big ship left the New York harbour Mary went down to Wall Street with her father and Barney Pemberton and the real Vicomte Henry Denis de Lignes de Crouvert. The Vicomte's sailing from France had been delayed just a week too, it finally was made clear; he had cabled, but the house of Leavenworth had not received the cable. Someone else had, and it was that someone else who had substituted one of the Bullock servants for the Vicomte.

Just exactly what one business man did when another business man stooped to this sort of thing Mary neither knew nor cared. She knew that her father loved her again—French or no French—and that he had used the weapon that her bright eyes and good memory for faces had put into his hands to its fullest effect.

It was, however, highly satisfactory that the affair of interpretation had been finally carried off successfully. The real Vicomte was gentle and polite and middle-aged, with a sweet wife who had been in the convent with Gogo's sister and Mrs. Bernheim. Henri Denis de Crouvert tried his best to simplify matters for Mary, and Mary quite honestly took her little red dictionary down to her father's office, and matters went swimmingly. After a laughing, concentrating, hard-working hour of it everything was happily concluded, signatures put here and there, and Mary, flushed and weary, was receiving the Vicomte's congratulations upon her French. How long had she studied French?

"Ten years," Mary meant to say. But the words for years, months and days always had confused her, and she said "weeks" instead.

"Ten weeks!" the Frenchman echoed. "That is extraordinary!"

"Is he saying your French is extraordinary, Mary?" her father asked her in pride.

"Well, I think I told him something wrong," Mary answered honestly.

The night before they sailed Mary tried to tell Gogo all about it. It was very hard, because she did not know such phrases as "when we were out camping," and "going over the mountain to the camp of this girl's aunt's friend," and "just happened to remember his face," and "tried all evening long to think where I'd seen him before."

Gogo, of course, knew that the man who had called himself the Vicomte de Crouvert had been somebody's chauffeur, caught red-handed as a spy; perhaps he was too much absorbed in watching the curves of Mary's red mouth to follow the story very closely. Now and then he would start up from a moment of abstraction and murmur: "*Comment?*"

Then Mary would gallantly start all over again, in her eager slipshod French.

"Because I am with my friends in Canada, see you? And I go—two years past, to visit their aunt in another camp, see you? And behold, the aunt has a French chauffeur who drives—who would drive—who might have driven—who takes us home, see you?—six or seven girls. Our automobile is broken. He will take—he does take—and we see him, but he does not, naturally, naturally, naturally, notice us, see you? And this aunt of my friend is also the great Madame Bullock, see you? The wife of the man who is my father's rival in this business. So that when I see him last week I ask myself: 'Do I—am I—have I see this face—before where?'—and then I recall——"

But this, even with Gogo's adoring assistance, was hard going. When Richard Leavenworth reached home a few minutes later Mary and the Vicomte Georges Francois Marie de Gresson Duprez had abandoned the topic. They were very close together indeed on the big leather davenport at the library fire; only the dark head and the gold head were visible, and a section of the Vicomte's shoulder. Mary was speaking in low monosyllables and only occasionally, but, by George, what she said was in French, all right! Richard distinctly heard the murmured syllables.

"*Wee. Wee. Ah, wee, mong chair. Ah, Gogo, wee. too joor.*"

Herbert Sutcliffe has scored over 130 centuries in first class cricket—

—in this article he tells you how his first was the most thrilling and—

—how the most vital of them was also the most painful

Centuries in the Making

LIFE BEFORE THE WICKET — 3

by

Herbert Sutcliffe

THE satisfaction of making a century is increased one hundred per cent. if it is recorded at a vital stage in the game—when one is batting against odds, against first-rate bowling, first-rate field placing, first-class tactics, and on a wicket that gives the bowlers a definite advantage.

My first century in first-class cricket gave me one of the big thrills of my career. The long-coveted goal was reached when I had just been promoted to opening the Yorkshire innings. We were playing Northamptonshire at Northampton. There had been rain overnight and after a few minutes' discussion with two or three of his leading players, the opposing captain decided that Yorkshire would take first knock.

After examining the wicket, I wouldn't have given the least hope of scoring a half-century, for the wet surface gave the impression of a wicket on which nearly every ball short of a length would kick disconcertingly and alarmingly. And there was that fine bowler " Bumper Wells " to try our skill to the utmost. The wicket quickly disproved our belief in its danger, and proved to be as easy paced as any I have ever played on.

When the big hearted " Bumper " had tired after his first onslaught, runs came rapidly. P. Holmes and I ran neck and neck with our individual scores, Percy winning on the post for the first fifty, and a few balls later our first century partnership for the first wicket was on the board. With my score still in the seventies, Holmes, with magnificent all-round stroke play, quickly shot into the 90's, and at this stage it was 5 to 1 on his completing his first century for Yorkshire before me. However, the run of the play changed. I received more than my fair share of the bowling, and a few boundary strokes took me to 94, when Holmes' score was 98.

That fine old Yorkshire and England cricketer, George Hirst, hero of scores of County and International games, said, " He ought to hit a six now." Whether it was a " sudden rush of blood to the head " or anxiety to leave the " naughty nineties " well behind, or the will to win the race with my partner, I really cannot say definitely. I took a silent jump to meet the ball, gave it a terrific punch with that part of the bat that C. I. Thornton must have used when he made his record hit from the Scarborough cricket ground into Trafalgar Square, and the ball was soaring to a great height to pitch at least 40 yards over the boundary. What a thrill !

I have made many more important centuries, but none will dim the memory of that glorious summer's day at Northampton which meant so much for Percy Holmes and me, for in addition to gaining our first individual centuries, we started a long list of century partnerships for the first wicket.

But the century that takes pride of place in my memory was made at Melbourne in the third test in 1928-9—with A. P. F. Chapman's team. We won the first two games comfortably, but the third proved a harder task. We had a struggle to pass Australia's first innings total and then our opponents made a good second innings response. When a thunderstorm arrived to dash all our hopes of deciding the rubber in three games, the home country had a lead of 320 runs with, I believe, 3 wickets to fall. After a delayed start we quickly disposed of the other wickets, but we had to make 332 runs to win. Only a miracle would save us.

Monty Noble, Warwick Armstrong, Clem Hill, Hugh Trumble and many other competent judges of the game had decided, after examining the wicket, before play started, that England would do well to score 90 runs.

After lunch began the biggest battle of my life. The great art of playing with a dead bat was never more necessary, for many of the Australian fielders were placed not more than 3 or 4 yards from the bat. It was dangerous even to try to force a half volley, for each ball simply " sat straight up." Therefore Hobbs and I were content to play with a lifeless bat. That was the secret of our success on such a wicket where balls continually popped head high.

Another of the finer points of batsmanship on that treacherous Melbourne wicket (a point only noticed by few people) is that we refrained from playing at the really dangerous balls—that pitched on the wicket and lifted disconcertingly. Withdrawing our bats from the danger zone, we repeatedly allowed the ball to hit our bodies. I have declared many times that batting on a sticky wicket is far more interesting and fascinating than any other type of wicket. It is the best test of batsmanship.

The percentage of really good sticky wicket players is low. There are scores of players who can score prolifically on hard easy-paced wickets—wherever cricket is played, but on encountering a wicket susceptible to " spin and lift," they become merely mediocre players.

To return to Melbourne. Our main object was to stay there as long as we could; scoring runs was a minor consideration. After an hour's intense bombardment we were still there. If we could only stay for another hour (until tea time) all would be well, for the wicket at 3.15 was just beginning to show signs of drying slightly.

Hobbs departed at 3.40 with a score of 49—a brilliant effort, worth at least 150. Our total when he left was 110. Hammond should have filled the vacancy, but knowing that he would be of far greater assistance to us in our attempt to force a victory later in the innings (and I might add that when Hobbs left an England victory was well within the bounds of possibility) that wonderful fighter, Jardine was sent in. The wicket was still vicious, and I must give him full marks for stepping into the breach and playing a classic knock at a most difficult time. We were both there at the tea interval, by which time the wicket had almost dried out, and we were firm favourites for another win. After tea the wicket behaved in a more friendly manner, but for an hour afterwards there was always danger lurking in the offing, and both Jardine and I resolved to avoid making scoring shots until the next day, provided we remained undefeated at the end of the day.

The wicket had dried out for the next day's play, so that run-scoring was comparatively easy. With but a mere dozen runs required for victory and six wickets to fall, I lost my wicket. Then there was a mild sensation, for two more wickets fell for the addition of only 4 runs, and we began to wonder whether, after all, our fighting effort would be of no avail. But George Geary hit the ball to the " pickets " to give England the victory in a most historic game.

My final score was 135, the best effort during my seventeen years of first class cricket. For a fortnight I carried many large bruises on my body, but the knowledge that the game and the rubber had been won was ample reward, and I would willingly take twice as much hammering to be able to repeat the performance.

An innings that I must place in my " six best " was played against Kent at Bradford last season. A ding-dong battle had been in progress for two days, during which we had a display of brilliant batsmanship from Frank Woolley, whose grace in executing every stroke is always a joy to watch; much as we players like to see the back of this famous batsman for a low score, we are always sorry if we have been deprived of seeing the world's most delightful player exploiting every shot in the batsman's repertory with the greatest of ease.

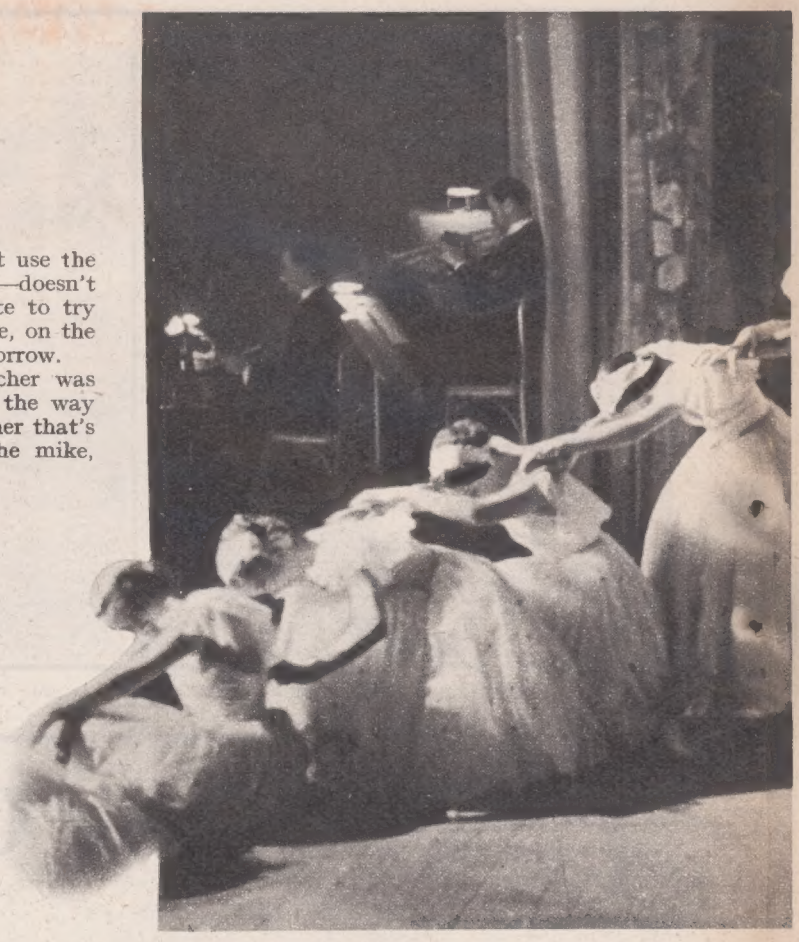
The final drama started with Yorkshire needing 192 runs for victory on a wicket made extraordinarily difficult by overnight rain.

Our start was not good. With half the side out for 91 runs, our task appeared almost hopeless for Freeman was able to turn the ball any distance from an inch to a yard and at the same time his length was superb.

Our skipper, Sellers, was the team's big hope, and after a few overs of uncertainty he settled down to give a splendid exhibition of defensive play. His stand with me virtually settled the issue, for when I played forward to one of Freeman's googlies which turned sharply to hit my pad—to be out L.B.W.—we needed but a dozen or so runs for victory. My personal score was 110, but what a fight it had been !

This article in the "Thinking Aloud" series takes you behind the scenes of a big London theatre-restaurant, revealing the thoughts of EDDIE LEWIS, right-hand man to Clifford Fischer, the famous American revue producer. The "booth" referred to in the article is a projection chamber in the roof from which the lighting and electrical installations are controlled. Told by

J. Murray Smith



Curtain's

"HI, doorman! Where the heck's that call-boy? Right, get him quick! And gimme the book. Looks as though all the girls are in . . . Young Chopin, Mallet, Fordue . . . hope Miss Asp is all right to-night . . . Duclos, Lons . . . yes, all in. Ah, here's the call-boy.

"What's that? Miss Asp sick! Why didn't you let me know sooner? Looking for me! Go on, get moving. Notify Miss Laure Lons that she goes on in place of Miss Asp in the Bull Fight number—and hurry!"

Better see Miss Mason right away about the wardrobe—not that Miss Lons'll need many clothes. Lemme see, that's down another floor, next the quick-change room. Deuce of a draught in this corridor—guess that's what got Miss Asp. This is the room—give a knock.

"All right to come in? Right, I'm coming."

How she ever sorts any one dress out of this lot beats me. Gosh, it's warm in here.

"Evening, Miss Mason. You know that Miss Asp is sick? Yep—Laure Lons goes on for her. Good kid, Laure—she'll make out all right. But I want you to see she gets that cloak fixed right, see? And have her dressed and on the side in good time so that I can check up. Okay?"

Now to take a look at the first set. Didn't go over everything this afternoon after rehearsal. What was it I meant to change, now? . . . Ah, I remember, the gelatine in that baby spot. Have a word with the stage manager first.

"Evening, Portsmouth. All set?"

Shan't trouble to check over, not if he's satisfied. Looks all right to me. Use the 'phone in the prompt corner—it's quicker.

What's the number, now—31. Three—one—that's it.

"Hullo, that you, Bob. Listen, I'll be up there in a moment. Meanwhile I want you to change that pink—no, *pink!*—yuh, it's too deep. Use a lighter gelatine, one that'll bring out the gloss on those plumes—make 'em look good, will you?

"'Nother thing. After the black-out in the first number, after part three, that is—you know, where the tabs open half-way, and two girls come out, one each side. That's it. Well, catch the girl on the prompt side with a white spot, and the one on the opposite side with a pink spot—that's instead of two whites or two pinks. Get me? Right, I'll be up later."

If I can only get clear of this crowd!

Just slip out front for a moment, now. H'm—that food smells good. Ought to have stopped for lunch instead of—still, got plenty done, to-day. Here we are, now. Looks as though the house is pretty full—and that's the band-cue, too. Jack Harris looks pleased with himself—his boys seem to know the joke. Get back-stage, quick.

Hullo, what's Boreo doing on this side!

"What's the idea, Emile? Your throat? Well, what about it? You can't sing! Sure? Well, go on and talk and we'll do something about cutting your song, or something."

Must be something about this English climate . . . now what's to be done . . .? Pity we didn't put a clause in Boreo's contract about his larynx! Still, if he can't sing he can talk, and dance. Better change the routine of the second part—put Boreo on where Campo has the quick change—yes, that's good. Then we can cut the song right out this time . .

"Hey, Portsmouth! Know about Boreo—yuh, he's got a throat all right. Listen, this is what we'll do. Put Boreo on with his first number in the second half of the programme, his second one on the first—that's it—to cut the song out. All right."

Now, how's the time. One minute. Front curtain's down all ready. Dance floor's clear. Give 'em the "stand-by," then.

"Dim house lights!"

There they go. Good. Is Boreo there? Girls ready? Okay.

"Okay, let's go!"

Curtains, lights, music. Guess everything'll run along all right now, with Portsmouth in charge. Get around the front again. . . .

Ah, that pink's a lot better. Shouldn't use the same colour on that mannequin, though—doesn't suit the dress, or anything. Make a note to try out a magenta and a green together—here, on the cuff'll do—and try for a softer effect to-morrow.

Gee, there's a crowd here. Wish Fischer was here—he'd be pleased. Don't quite like the way Boreo's voice comes over. Not sure whether that's his larynx or not—more likely to be the mike, though—amplifier wants "stepping up."

Get up into the booth, then. Talk to Bob about these things together. . . .

"Evening. Evening, sir. Evening, Mr. Poulson. Yes, very good house."

This rate, it's going to take an hour to get up. Trouble about knowing people . . . cut around the back, through the bar, perhaps . . .

Might stop for a quick one.

"Yuh, just a nip. Thanks."

'S better. What with running back and front, up and down stairs. No lunch. Late dinner—magenta and green, that's the combination. Careful, here, it's dark after the restaurant. Gosh, these lights give some heat!

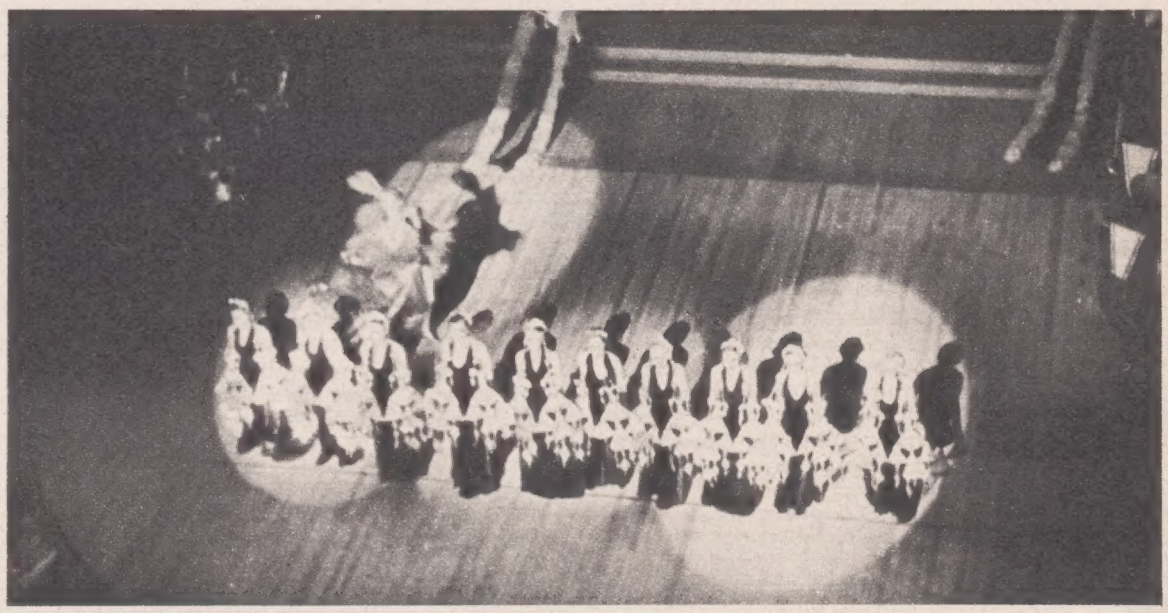
Better not lean too far—might feel dizzy in this glare. There's Bob, at the end, behind that lantern.

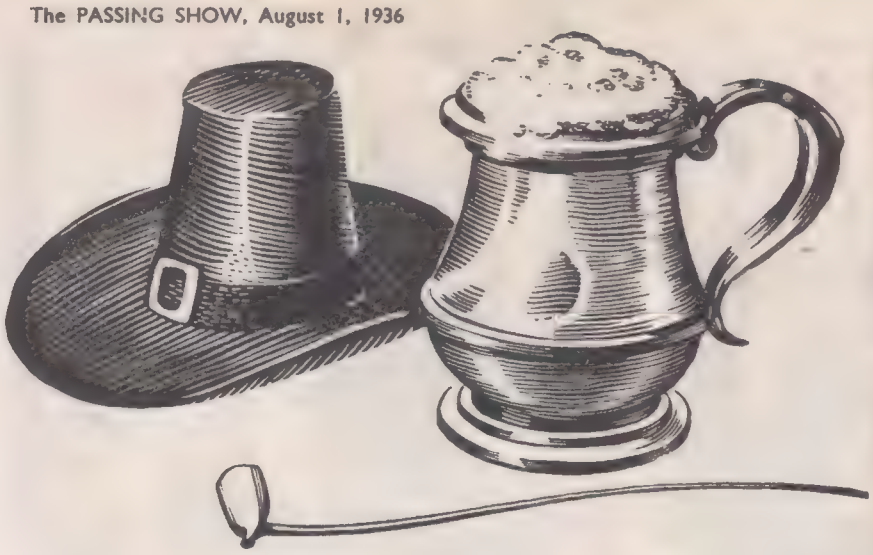
"Got that pink in now, Bob? Well, here's part three—let's have it. H'm—yuh, that's a whole lot better—think so? Sure, she looks like a girl now. The other one made her into a waxwork or something. Okay, Bob. Now, what step-up are you using on that centre mike? Three? Bring it up a point or two, will you? It's not carrying to the upper tiers, and Boreo's got a bad throat—that doesn't help any."

Wonder to me how seven men can work on a ledge like this without falling over, or getting in one another's way. Bad as the old-fashioned flies, when men had to climb over the side . . . reminds me, we'll have to "fly" that big circular piece after to-night. Mention it to Portsmouth when I go down. Just doesn't leave enough room for all the girls to get off without tearing those dresses. Miss Mason can't keep the wardrobe at this rate, and it's costing a fortune. That'll mean another man on the prompt side, to work the hydraulics . . . What the devil! That's the second time the band has played the chorus. Something must be wrong with the stage! Must get back—see what's the matter.

Telephone! Answer it, here.

● The lighting booth built in the roof of the theatre from which the men behind the lamps have this bird's eye view of the girls on the revolving stage.





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Short Short Story by

Margot Careme

CHILD *Prodigy*

"YOU see," said Mrs. Smithers to Mrs. Wilson over the garden wall, "my Cyril's never been quite like the other boys, if you know what I mean, doesn't care for games or anything rough; and now that Mr. Wyatt, his choirmaster, has spoken to me so encouragingly about his voice, it's unsettled me a bit."

Mrs. Wilson nodded understandingly, and then demanded abruptly, "When are you and Arthur Jones going to get married? After all, Mrs. Smithers, he's been paying attention to you for these last two years, and there seems no sense in going on wasting the best years of your life."

"I can't do anything until I know what's going to happen about Cyril——"

"How d'you mean 'happen about him'?"

"Well, I might as well tell you my dear—you'll most likely be hearing any way before long, if things go as we expect. Cyril's going to sing to Harry Gerpstein, the theatrical agent in Charing Cross Road, next Tuesday. They do a lot of the bookings for the music halls, and Mr. Wyatt, the choirmaster, knows one of the young men there, and he's told them about Cyril, and got them interested, if you know what I mean. He says they are always on the lookout for new 'turns' and child prodigies seem to be a draw nowadays."

"Yes, but what sort of a 'turn' will your Cyril do, Mrs. Smithers? He doesn't dance at all, does he?"

"Oh, he doesn't *dance*. I talked it over with Mr. Wyatt, and we thought he ought to be billed as 'The Boy Soprano.' He can sing anything off, if you know what I mean, so he'll just come on and sing his songs."

"Well, I'm sure I hope everything will go off satisfactory, Mrs. Smithers—what does Arthur think?"

"Oh, he doesn't like the idea much—wants to teach him to box and make a man of him. He says I've made him too soft, and the boy's got as much fight in him as any other lad. But he knows if Cyril's audition on Tuesday is a success—I shall have to go touring round with him, and there'll be no chance of us getting married for ages then."

The little Blonde crossed one slim leg over the other, and idly surveyed the toe of her shoe.

"'Ow you been getting along, dear?" asked the man behind the big desk, as with a dexterous sweep of his tongue he sent his cigar snappily from one side of his mouth to the other.

"Not so bad, Harry. I went over big in the Panto, thought perhaps you could fix me up for Concert Party, I'd like——"

"Come in, come in," shouted the man at the desk, as there came a timid knock on the door.

The little Blonde looked round, and saw a middle-aged woman closely followed by a scared-looking boy of about twelve.

"Well, what can I do for you?" demanded the man at the desk in his loudest voice.

"I'm Mrs. Smithers, Mr. Gerpstein—you remember Mr. Wyatt arranged with you to hear Cyril sing? This," smiling encouragingly at the boy, "is Cyril."

Cyril was looking pale round the lips. The only thing about him that was not pale were his knees; they were distinctly red. Whenever he was unhappy or ill at ease, his knees gave him away.

He cast furtive eyes round the office—yes, there was the piano in the corner—he hadn't made up his mind what he should sing yet.

The telephone rang and made him jump.

"Hello," yelled Gerpstein, chewing at his cigar viciously.

The little Blonde was watching the middle-aged woman and her boy. What on earth were they doing here, she wondered. That poor little beggar, he looked scared stiff. He depressed her somehow. These offices weren't the places for kids that age, unless they were hard-boiled little pros. She was hard-boiled herself, but they got her down just the same.

Last time she called in here on old Gerpstein, Larry had been with her, and it was the next night they'd had the party, and he'd made her so wild, and she'd "walked out" on him. Oh well, she'd forgotten all about him anyway, he wasn't worth bothering about, Larry—conceited and selfish—she'd told him often enough. Funny that she hadn't been interested in any other fellows since though.

Gerpstein put down the receiver with a bang.

"What you goin' to sing, sonny?" he asked the boy.

"He knows 'Wagon Wheels'," answered his mother before he had a chance to speak.

Cyril got up and searched for the song in his music case—found it, and stood there waiting.

"Bert," shouted Mr. Gerpstein into the next room, "Come in here and play for this lad; he's goin' to sing."

"Bert" appeared in a moment—took the music from the boy, and sat down at the piano.

The boy took a deep breath—there was no need to be afraid—he knew all the words backwards—but he wasn't feeling at all well. Something was hammering against his ribs, and his throat felt funny. His mother watched him nervously, and her heart sank as she noticed his knees going gradually redder and redder.

"Sing like you do at home, Duckie," she whispered.

"Bert" played the opening bars. He listened for the boy's first notes.

The little Blonde watched him anxiously—this was awful—poor little devil.

She heard Gerpstein say: "Put it down a bit, Bert—seems too 'igh."

So they tried a tone lower. This time it was a little better, but not much.

"Come in, come in," shouted Gerpstein again, and the little Blonde started, and her heart missed a beat as she heard him say, "'Ello, Larry, 'ow are you—'ow you been gettin' on, eh?"

The boy was getting through his song, and Gerpstein was talking to Larry—but she knew without looking round, that it was *her* Larry.

She heard him answering, "Oh, I've been going over big Harry—top o' the bill next week—single act—I'm doin' fine," and then a pause. "Good Lord—it's *you*, Dolly! Who'd have expected this, eh? How's tricks?"

The little Blonde answered airily, "Didn't expect to see you here—haven't seen your name up anywhere lately—thought you'd retired from the business."

He laughed. "Little cat," he thought, "still trying to take the mike out of a fellow." But she was just as pretty. Looked prettier than ever this morning she did, too.

"Doin' anything when you've finished here?" he asked her.

"Nothing special," she answered promptly, and was annoyed with herself for not hesitating. Silly fool, to see him again, when she'd put him out of her mind for ever.

She heard Gerpstein say: "Well, I'm sorry, Mrs. —er—but I'm afraid the boy's no good to me—couldn't do nothing with 'im."

Cyril gathered up his music, he seemed anxious to be gone. His mother whispered, "You were nervous, Duckie—but don't worry."

The little Blonde looked at him kindly, and flashed him her most dazzling smile. "It's not the life for a nice lad like you," she said. "You go back to school, and take the stuffing out of somebody."

The would-be prodigy stared at her for a moment, went very red, opened his mouth to speak and said nothing.

Larry stood up. "You're a swell kid, Doll. Come on, let's go and eat somewhere.

They were nearly out of the door when Gerpstein shouted, "Gosh—I nearly forgot you two used to go about together—any 'ow—'ere's wishin' you luck!"

And over the coffee Larry said to the little Blonde, "He's a grand fellow, Gerpstein."

"Oh, I don't know," she answered, "he's never got *me* any work."

"But he's got you a darn good-looking husband," modestly declared the Top o' the Bill; "he rang me up last night, to tell me you were coming in this morning!"

"What'll we do now, Mum?" asked the boy, when they were outside the office.

"We're going back to find Arthur Jones," his mother answered, and he wondered why she kissed him.

● Bert played the opening bars. He listened for the boy's first notes.

Short Story by—

Illustrated by Sinclair Calow

HELLO,

SPREADING like a fog, the blue haze from the neon lights of the hotel over the tips of the trees in the park, set a 2 a.m. halo about the odd shape of the all-night refreshment stand. The man behind the counter stopped humming dreamily to himself as a girl entered and climbed sleekly on to a stool. A young man followed her out of the quietening street.

"Hello, Sweetheart," he said. "Here we are. What can I get you?"

The girl turned boredly to look at him. "There are plenty of stools," she indicated, "farther down."

"Free for all, lady. I'd rather sit here."

"Please yourself, naturally. But would it have occurred to you, Gorgeous, that anyone as thrilling as you is liable to put a girl off her feed?"

"Feed? So you feed at this hour?" The young man loosened his white silk muffler. "But I'm always putting girls off their feed, and what of it? You prefer a hot dog to me?"

"M'm. And I could tell you why."

"I'll try to bear it. Why?"

"For one thing, loathsome as a hot dog may be, at least a girl can eat it."

For a moment the young man considered, then: "Two coffees," he ordered, and offering his companion a cigarette lit it for her with his pocket lighter. "Hot dogs!" he said, more to himself, and silence seemed to drop over the establishment.

The man in the chef's hat—Albert Peacock, proprietor of this old-established family heirloom on four wheels—leant back reflectively among his sizzling urns. The right sort of custom. The young lady in her white fur wrap and shimmering evening gown had class. An expensive fragrance clung to her, and the way she looked belonged to the bright lights of the West End, away through the trees. The young gentleman was wearing one of those hats which collapse if pressed firmly against the shirt front, and if not bored was trying to look that way.

Albert Peacock began to hum again as his thoughts drifted to Miss Bradley. He would have given a half share in the family business to be able to talk like this customer. How can you be as familiar as that with a girl unless you know her well? How can you know her well without being familiar? It had been worrying him for weeks. Albert was certainly big enough and easy to look at in his way, but shy. It was two months, four days since he had first come hesitantly out into the open with a "Nice day!" to Miss Bradley, and since then, he was the first to admit that in spite of a daily purchase of cigarettes in the little shop she graced, he had got little farther.

With all the yearning of a young man of 22 who has always lived with his widowed mother, Albert Peacock burned to tell Miss Bradley that she was so beautiful, he dreamt wistfully about her each night, and that by day he went about his work with a close little pain under his heart. "Nice day," or "Looks like rain" expressed none of this: and, perversely, the logic of this indisputable fact made him more desperately in love with her than ever.

"What would a good-looking girl like you do," the young man suddenly said, "if a fellow like me was thinking of taking a run, say, along the Great West Road, for a breath of fresh air, and asked——"

"The way?" This girl, Albert noted, had beautiful eyes: it seemed that she and the toff had had a row, or something. "Why, she'd tell him straight along Piccadilly and through Knightsbridge until——"

"Not the way, Precious!"

"No?"

"A fellow would know the way. He would know the way where, and the way how, too. Some of us are born like that."

"And some strangled at birth for no reason at all."

"You think I should have been strangled at birth?"

"I'd have allowed them a day or two to get a good look at what had happened."

"That's decent of you, my sweet. Handsome, I call it!" Reaching for an egg-and-cress sandwich, the young man fixed the end sternly then bit it off. "You know how it is. There's all to-night and when the sun comes up to-morrow, what does it bring? A day without hope. Without you."

"Give me another cigarette. I'm going to cry in a minute."

"Save it for my shoulder in the car."

"I'll save it for my grandchildren."

"How many have you?"

Albert, watching round-eyed, saw the girl struggle with a smile, then laugh outright. She had lovely teeth. They were like Miss Bradley's—only Miss Bradley had a shy way of smiling when she showed them. That evening, on his way to drag the stall round from the mews to his pitch, Miss Bradley had smiled at him when he entered the shop in that shy way, and the emotion that always took him, rose and threatened to strangle him. She was, he imagined, about nineteen. The little shop belonged to her mother, who occasionally rumbled instructions from a back room. With her long lashes, grey eyes, and complexion so freshly beautiful that it reminded him of flowers, Albert considered Miss Bradley virtually divine. Not that he had mentioned her to his mother.

He was thinking now that if he could only talk like this young man. But, how could a fellow put down his shilling for cigarettes and say: "I love you, Miss Bradley!"

"Listen, sweetheart!" the young man urged. "Joking apart. I'd take a girl friend along with me for this run, if she were reasonably well-behaved and remembered her place."

"Yes. But where would her place be?"

"East of the handbrake."

She shook her head. "I must be going."

"Or just drive her home?"

"I'd rather walk home. I'm tired."

She pushed to her feet, the young man watching her sulkily. "I hope dogs run out and bite you," he said.

When Albert's mother had decided to retire from the coffee stall, the era of chromium plating was at hand. Albert, entering into his inheritance, made full use of the metal. He rebuilt the stall, rolling it on motor-car wheels with pneumatic tyres, spreading out an awning overhead, and changing the whole atmosphere of the outfit by naming the stall *Quicksnax*. As the girl lingered now under the striped awning, the young man tried again.

"And how were all the girls at school?" he enquired.

"Fine, thanks. When do you go back?"

"I left last term. Can't you see I'm growing a moustache?"

It all sounded so easy to Albert. He watched the girl shade her eyes to peer across the twelve inches separating her from her lover.

"Come back in a month and I'll let you know. Well—thanks for the lovely time!"

"Don't let *me* keep you out of bed! Goodbye!"

Vaguely troubled by this domestic understanding, Albert was following the girl through the blue haze as she walked down the street, when things began to happen with alarming abruptness.

An agonised squeal of tyres sounded down the narrow lane at the back of the hotel. A long, black car tore round the corner. Crashing a wing into the wall, it cannoned back off the pavement. Albert had time to see a man in a grey hat fighting with the wheel before the car turned round twice, struck the railings, and overturned.

Two men tipped out. The sound of a pursuing car, braking heavily, reached them, and with a cry one of them raced off into the darkness of the mews opposite. The second man was slower. He was shaken. He looked desperately round as he struggled to his feet, then dived for the coffee stall.

Like a man in a dream, Albert saw the narrow door that formed his private entrance flung open, and before he had time to realise what was happening, the tall white hat lifted like magic from his head, jumped to the head of the intruder, and the string of an apron from the peg looped down over it. Something hard pressed into Albert's waistline.

"Keep your fat mouth shut," panted a voice. "And act natural!"

"Here! I say——" began the young gentleman.

"That means you, too!" the impostor snarled. "I've got a gun under the counter, and you're covered—understand?"

The tyres of the second car squealed as it braked behind the wreck. Police officers sprang out—three of them, it seemed to Albert Peacock, swarming like ants about the scene. One of them hurried over to the stall and cast a sharp look over Albert and his new companion, exhibited now like menagerie animals in a travelling cage.

"Where'd they go?"

"Down the mews, guv'nor," the gunman answered. "What's wrong?"

A sergeant came over from the wreck. "They got clear," he said sourly. He turned to the young man in evening dress. "You saw it, sir?"

The young man swallowed. "It—it happened so quickly. I wasn't watching but I heard the crash."

"Turned the car over right in front of us," the man in Albert's hat offered. "Next thing we knew they was off like scalded cats down the mews there. Stolen car?"

"That and burglary."

Albert's eyes turned from this confusion of thought to the wreck. It was, it seemed, real. The third policeman was drawing furs out of the car through a broken window.

"Leave it," the sergeant ordered. "You'd better telephone." He stroked his moustache for a moment, then turned on them again in a way that made Albert jump. It was not that he was nervous about the police. He did not drink. He had never had a bet in his life. Further, this stall had been started by his grandfather on this same pitch, and no one had a word to say against Mrs. Peacock or her son. Yet, undoubtedly he was in bad company now, and he did not see for the life of him what he could do about it.

—B. L. Jacot

As Albert pulled on his chef's hat a gunshot exploded in his ear.

SWEETHEART

"Could you recognise the men if called on?"

"One," Albert began faithfully, "had a grey hat." He stopped on that, for a screwing motion was making itself felt at the waist.

"Anything else?"

He shook his head. "No."

"Must have been a bit cold," the young man offered.

"You?" the sergeant shot at Albert's room-mate, ignored the young man.

"Can't say as I saw much of them, guv'nor."

"You, sir?"

Albert saw a steely glint in the gunman's eyes as he fixed the young gentleman. "I don't think I really saw them at all," the customer decided. "I certainly heard the crash. Next thing I noticed was you arriving."

"What abart a cup of corfee, gents?" the gunman suggested in the awkward pause that followed.

But the sergeant was thinking. The question took Albert by surprise. He was indignant. He had gone through school, even, without a fight. All his life he had been law-abiding, respectable, one to avoid all argument. And here was a burglar and car bandit offering his coffee to——

"Anyone else in here when it happened?"

"Ye-es," Albert stammered, taken off-guard. "That is . . ."

"Just the three of us you see here," the gunman explained.

"What d'you mean?"

"There was a young lady," Albert managed. "But she was just leaving when the car crashed round the corner there." An atmosphere of doubt seemed to have developed. He appealed to the young gentleman. "You remember, sir. Your wife had just left."

"My *wife*?"

"What's this about another person?" As the officer drew ominously closer, the muzzle of that automatic pistol dug more firmly into Albert. He could move no farther away. "Was there anyone here who's not accounted for? Come on! Let's have it!"

"There was a girl here when I came in," the young man explained. "We spoke to each other, but I did not know her. I don't know who she was. I've never seen her before."

"What the hell d'you think you're talking about?" the officer inquired, looking the proprietor of the stall over with anything but honest pride in one so intelligent.

"You—you never met her before?" questioned Albert, ignoring the other.

"Not till I walked in here. Why? Does it make any difference?"

Albert's mouth was agape, giving him a slightly fish-like appearance. He could find no words. The things this young man had said to that young lady—a young lady he had never met before! Darling. My lovely. Precious. Why, the very first words he had spoken — not: "Nice day!", or "Turned cold?" but, "Hello, sweetheart!"

"Corfee for the gents, Cully!" the gunman reminded. With one hand occupied he could not get it himself, and a certain grimness reflected in his tones.

"Cuc-coffee?"

"Thanks, I will," mentioned the sergeant. "Plenty of sugar."

"More milk than coffee in mine," the other officer asked.

"It's on the house, gents," the impostor at Albert's side stated. "Look alive, my lad!"

"My *wife*!" the young gentleman observed, more to himself.

Albert had half turned to the coffee urn when suddenly he became conscious of an elemental prickling of the skin. It was as if someone were playing electric currents upon him. He stopped short. There had never been anything like this before in the life so well-ordered for him by his mother. Something was going wrong.

Darling. My sweetness. Lovely. And to a girl he had never seen before!

Like a rocket something swooshed up inside him, deafening his ears with its roar, setting his blood seething like a millrace, shattering the structure of his old ideas, and filling the new intoxicating world to which he was rising with a trailing shower of rage. And gnawing at him all the time for a goading background was that common decency and fear to offend which had kept him to his tormentingly inadequate "Nice day."

Seizing a fruit pie he hit the gunman on the left cheek bone with it, and raising a knee rammed him in the midrib.

"Get out of here, you thieving hound!" he yelled in a voice which his mother certainly would not have recognised, and with a deft snatch he regained his chef's hat from the head of the reeling gunman.

As he paused to pull it on to his own head a gunshot exploded under his nose.

It was probably the generous allowance of gooseberry in the pie that saved the life of Mrs. Peacock's only child, Albert. Whatever may be its quality gastronomically, no one can urge that gooseberry on the eyelash makes for good marksmanship.

The next few seconds were full of exploding noise and crashing crockery. Urns hissed like angry snakes as Albert struck out right and left. Hot water scalded him. Flames played painfully on exposed parts of his person. Like a drum beat that pistol kept exploding, under his armpit, between his legs, down his back as he rammed with his head. Woodwork, chromium plating, forks and spoons, sugar basins, butter, primus stoves and uncooked potatoes mingled themselves indiscriminately into the flailing mill of arms and legs.

The end came suddenly. A yellow sheet of flame leapt before his eyes and a claw, it seemed, tore at his shoulder. . . .

When he opened his eyes, Albert smelt a hospital smell. A nurse was smiling at him. His mother was at his side, holding his hand.

"They got the bullet out," a familiar voice informed him. It was the sergeant.

"You can go home, now," the nurse said.

"Home?" He pulled his fingers away from his mother's grasp. "What——"

"Any time you're thinking of signing, let me know. It would be something to do when I retire."

"Signing? What for?"

"Cruiser, or light-heavy, I should say," the sergeant explained. "That crook must have annoyed you. You should see your stall! But don't worry about that, my lad. You'll be compensated, I'll see to that. Well, he's packed away now, and I don't mind telling you that you're in for some warm compliments when you get to court."

"Don't worry about anything, Bertie dear," he heard his mother urging. "You must be quiet and rest."

There followed a lot of hazy talk. It passed him by. Albert was recalling certain important items. There was the cool way in which a young gentleman would look across at a girl through a cloud of cigarette smoke.

"What would a good-looking girl like you say, if . . ."

He put his mother on an omnibus. "Don't worry," he told her. "I'm all right."

As he set out across the park his chin rose. A purposeful, almost piratical glint in his eye spoke of a definite enterprise in hand. The brim of his soft felt hat took on a cant to starboard, and folk moved out of his way.

Leaving the park on the other side, a curious tremor trickled icily down his spine and, swinging round to the front of him, began spirals underneath the belt. The little shop was in sight, some fifty paces away. Instead of ringing on the paving stones, his footstep began to drag in a leaden cadence.

Darling! Precious! In spite of himself his stride quickened, and, unable to restrain it, it took him past the shop almost at a gallop. A hundred yards down the narrow street he found himself perspiring freely, but suddenly he recalled the way the young lady's eyes had turned lazily, just like those of any other human being, before she had smiled tolerantly at the young gentleman. "Thanks for the lovely time."

He retraced his steps, seizing the handle of the shop door and twisting it as if it were a chicken's neck. So warm compliments were going to be paid him in court? The sergeant wanted to sign him up? If a bullock had entered the little shop backwards, old Mrs. Bradley at the back wouldn't have known the difference.

Miss Bradley was behind the counter.

Feelings as of a miner who steps into the cage at the top of the shaft just as the cable parts, assailed him as he sensed the presence. For an awful moment his fate hung in the balance. Strange lights seemed to fall about the girl behind the counter when he raised his eyes, but he paid no attention whatsoever to them. Loathsome as a sausage roll may be, a girl can eat it.

"Hello, sweetheart!" he heard someone say in a voice that shocked him. Had not the door been so firmly shut behind him, he would have bolted from a standing start. What, he was asking himself, had possessed him to do this awful thing?

Only for a moment did a puzzled look cloud the serenity of that heavenly face, then, as he watched spellbound, it coloured beautifully under dominance of the conquering male.

"Oh, go on, Mr. Peacock!" Miss Bradley protested. "You are a one!"

Mr. Peacock's braces creaked dangerously as he filled his lungs. Consternation melted from his face in a broad grin that spoke of ice that is broken at last, and ways that lie clear ahead.

"What," he heard someone declaim in a voice that no longer shocked him, "would a good-looking girl like you say if a fellow like me. . . ."

Ku Klux Klan *of the* Jungle

by A. R. Lindt

the explorer who has recently returned from a journey through Liberia—the only country in which Black Men still govern.

CAREFULLY a heavy coffin is lowered over the side of the steamer into the lighter below. The customs-boat of the little port of Sinoe is flying the Liberian flag at half-mast. Through the three small windows cut into the upper end of all Liberian coffins one can see the mulatto-face of the corpse, the immaculate white tie, the frock coat.

What one cannot see is the Masonic apron around his waist. The dead man is Samuel Ross, Protestant clergyman, Vice-President of the Negro Republic and one of the foremost citizens of the land.

The Krumen bend to their oars, rowing steadily towards the surf, where, in stormy weather, many boats are wrecked. But to-day the sea is smooth and oily, with scarcely a line of foam to mark the bar. The boat shoots forward on the crest of a wave. Two more strokes, and they have reached the quiet waters of the bay.

On the shore the assembled citizens of Sinoe await the return of their dead. They give a sudden cry of horror. The surf boat has overturned. Dark heads and oars are bobbing in the water.

The Krumen are perfectly amphibious. In the quiet bay they have no difficulty in saving both themselves and the Liberians, who are all non-swimmers. They return to dive for the coffin—without success. The citizens of Sinoe, comforting themselves with the assurance that the surf will soon wash it upon the sandy beach, postpone the funeral ceremonies until the following day.

But the waves throw no coffin upon the shore, not even a splintered fragment of wood, neither upon that day nor upon any day to come.

Later a fisherman reports having seen a naked body lying upon a lonely island reef. When he returns to the spot with the police, the body has disappeared. The description given by him of the features of the corpse leaves no doubt but that it is that of the former Vice-President of Liberia. The beach is thoroughly combed, the Krumen, sailing out to sea each morning in their canoes, are commissioned to seek for the remains of the worthy man. Sinoe is unwilling to forego the pomp and ceremony of so important a funeral.

At last a native finds upon a rock a white tie, the frock-coat, and even the masonic apron of Mr. Samuel Ross. The garments are neither wet nor crumpled. They are laid neatly folded in a pile, as a well-trained vasherman might leave them. The shirt and collar are starched, the trousers beautifully pressed.

When this news reaches the citizens of Sinoe, they wait no longer but open and consume without further delay the tinned provisions laid out in readiness for the funeral banquet. They know now that the oft-mooted rumours are true. The Reverend and Honourable Samuel Ross, Freemason, Vice-President of the Republic, had been a member of the Crocodile (or Water Leopard) Men.

The Crocodile Society is one of the most powerful secret organisations of the coastal tribes. When a member dies, the society never fails to gain possession of his body by mysterious means, so that it may be buried, stark naked, and with all due ceremony, far from the uninitiated in the depths of the bush.

The bush is the landmark of the West African scene, interwoven with twisting lianas, almost impenetrable, bathed in the eternal twilight of green shadows. The bush is the dwelling-place of the uncanny, of man-eating beasts, of those dark powers that exercise so strange an influence upon the lives of the natives. The negroes of the West Coast, ignorant of the wide horizons of the East African steppe, are the mystics of the Dark Continent.

Even the Liberians, descendants of freed slaves from across the Atlantic, have kept, despite their American upbringing, their inborn urge toward the weird and the uncanny. They established Masonic Lodges upon European lines, but Freemasonry alone could not still their mystic hunger. Not only in Monrovia, but in most of the coastal towns, wherever Liberians had settled, the Lodge (affiliated to an American Lodge) held sway.

It worked powerfully by subterranean means during the presidential elections. All influential men were among its members. But the black Freemasons soon found that where the bush began their power came to an end. More perfect and complete than any Masonic Lodge, there reigned the secret organisations of the natives. In their councils the chiefs come to their most important decisions.

And these societies are the guardians of unnamed secrets, the transmitters of all that cult of black magic respectfully referred to by the Liberians as "African Science." The grand masters of the art can create artificial lightning and guide it like an obedient horse, finally causing it to descend in a death-dealing flash upon the head of a distant enemy.

They can carve arrows that will pierce the heart of an opponent many miles away and, the deed accomplished, return bloodstained to the quiver. The Liberians may be clergymen and doctors of law, but the superstitions of their West African forefathers are still deep-rooted in their hearts.

The secret societies of Africa constitute a complete hierarchy at the base of which is the Porro. Membership of the Porro is an essential qualification for entry into the higher organisations. With the exception of a few districts, the Porro is as international in West Africa as Freemasonry is in Europe. The difference is the membership is compulsory for all men. A non-member is scorned and despised, refused admittance to the councils of the elders; children jeer at him and no woman will consent to be his wife. Entrance into the Porro marks for the negro his entrance into manhood.

Near the village a screen of dried palm leaves has been erected beside the narrow footpath. Before it, their long handles stuck into the ground, stand a row of brooms roughly carved into hideous faces. The entrance to the Porro. The entrance to the bush-school. For a period of from three to five years the bush has engulfed its scholars. No monastery has such stern rules as the Porro.

After four years some of the boys return to the village. Not all. The bush demands its sacrifices. A small piece of wood is laid before the huts of those who have died. No word is spoken, no questions asked. The mother must mourn in silence. Fat babies have become thin muscular youths and self-willed, disobedient children men who bow unquestioningly to the will of their elders. There are blue tattoo-marks upon their arms and backs, the badge of membership of the Porro.

No school has a more ambitious programme than the African Porro-bush. Its scholars are trained to meet all the contingencies of life. It is at once board-school, trade-school and catechism-class. In those four years the boys learn to weave mats of palm leaves, to build huts, to clear the bush, to make farms.

Elders instruct them in the laws and customs of their tribe and in their future duties as fathers of families. An advanced young chief of Northern Liberia even introduced English-lessons. The boys lead a spartan existence, sleeping in open huts—the nights in the north of Liberia are often bitterly cold—and eating very sparingly. The smallest misdemeanour is severely punished.

But all this part of the curriculum is mere by-play. The essential task of the Porro is to initiate the boys into black magic. "African Science." The medicine men are the teachers of the bush-school, its principal is the local "devil" man. The scholars are instructed in the magic of their tribe, in the use of various medicines, both those with healing powers and those that are deadly poisons.

Of course. the ordinary man is only initiated into the fundaments of magic. The knowledge of the higher secrets—the raising of lightning, for example—is reserved to the medicine-men, the members of the higher societies, and, above all, to the "devils."

Laughter

The "PASSING SHOW" Smile Section

"Do you mind if my son takes your picture?"

"There's a hole in your left pocket, sir—I hired that suit last week."

"That ought to scare those fish away."

"We couldn't afford to keep the man on."

" Oh, George, quick! I'm sure there's a shark under the bed."

" Stowaways, begad ! "

A MAN AND THE LUGGAGE

by A. C. BARRETT

"We expected to have visitors, uncle, so we came provided with a guest tent."

"He won't talk. He belonged to a gangster."

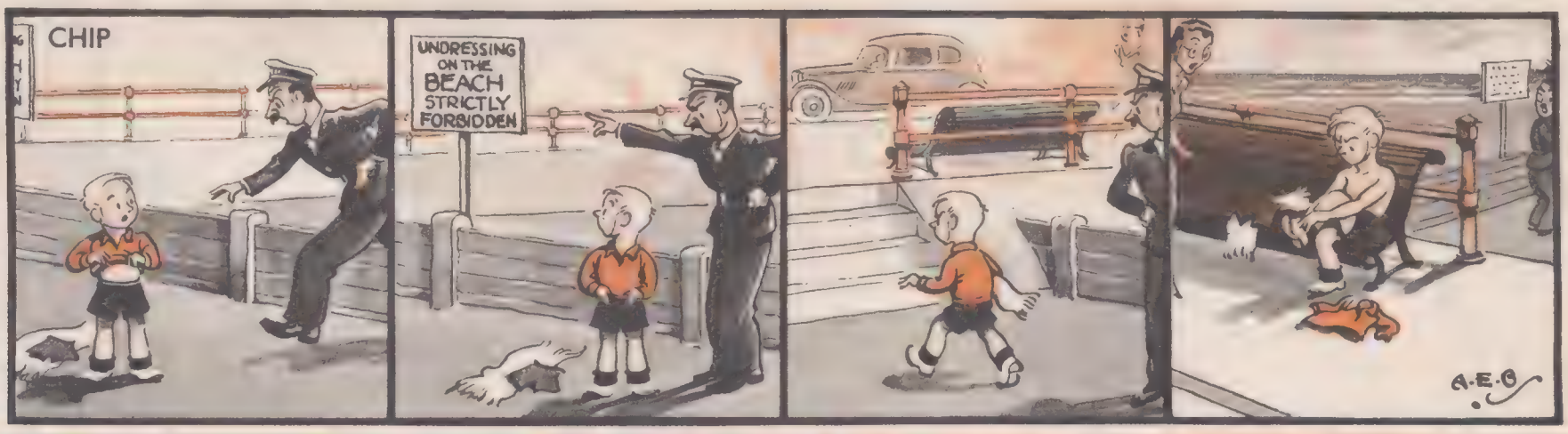
A suggestion for our next super liner.

LAUGH WITH THE WORLD

"I simply can't manage any other way! I still have a stiff shoulder from yesterday." *Koralle, Berlin.*

"Tell me, doctor, is that the mountain I slipped down?"
Das Interessante Blatt, Vienna.

"Now, John, I bet that whilst I was away you had a few free trips in my car."
"I never bet, sir."
Das Illustrierte Blatt, Frankfurt.



"Save up your money"-the old folks say!
But wot if there aint no rainy day!
Im all for having a good time now!
and how!

"You don't mean to tell me that is a police dog!"
"Sh-h—disguised."

OLD BILL and BERT

by BRUCE BAIRNSFATHER

HAS anyone offered *you* a bite of scrumptious, crunchy CREST yet—the very latest mouth-watering masterpiece in chocolate-coated butter-and-almond candy? Someone's bound to very soon! But you needn't wait for that heavenly moment, because they're selling it everywhere at the absurd price of *only 2d. a bar!*

CREST is the name in everybody's mouth!

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safe for silk

UNDIWASH is a very wonderful washing-powder specially prepared for washing delicate fabrics of all kinds. It contains *no soap or soda*, and is therefore absolutely safe, not only for underwear, but also for babies' clothes, silks, woollens, linens, coloured fabrics, etc. It does what no soap, soap flakes or soap product can do—washes out *all* the dirt—without leaving a sticky deposit in the weave. Makes white fabrics whiter and coloured fabrics brighter. And goes twice as far. Does not harm your hands, and can be used in cold water with equally good results. Recommended by some of the very largest Hosiery and Underwear Manufacturers. From your Grocer or Stores, 4½d. Trial size 2½d.

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Fiery SUN-BURN

Poisons and Scars!

A beautifully sun-tanned girl or child attracts admiring glances from all —and nothing suits a man better than a good coat of copper! BUT—Sunburn hurts—causes illness. Creates deadly poisons. Scars! . . .

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No need for Sunburn. By using Coolitan, a scientific greaseless cream, you get a gorgeous copper-bronze tan in two hours, plus positive protection. Used on face and body, Coolitan melts like snow and acts like magic. Sunbake all day if you like . . . No fear of burning, peeling or scarring. No chance of sickness. Coolitan increases the sun's tanning action, while absorbing the poison rays. Best for children as well as grown-ups. Why use messy glorified coconut creams that merely tan you when you can get a richer tan quicker—and more reliable protection. Giant tube 2/-. Obtainable from most Chemists, including Boots, Timothy Whites, Taylors, Stores, Beauty Salons, or direct from Kathleen Court (Eng.) Limited, Suite P3, 324 Regent Street, London, W.1.

SUN BATHE IN SAFETY

Continuing

The Legacy Murders

by

Francis Beeding

"Find it if you can . . "

READ THIS FIRST

Valerie Beauchamp, best-seller novelist, is murdered four days after her discovery that she has been hoaxed by fellow-members of a literary society, the Esoterics, into believing that one of her readers has fallen in love with her. Even though she was demented on hearing that the Esoterics had read her passionate love letters, her will shows she has left £200 a year to each of them—Councillor Joshua Stanton, Edward Calcott, who was the bogus lover, Frederick Reeves, Adelaide Tring, Naomi Garnett, and Cyril Sidebotham—and, if any of them dies, his income is to be shared by the others. The spotlight of the story moves to Marseilles, where a strange little man is furtively buying arsenic and a revolver. Then Adelaide Tring is poisoned. Lavinia Brown, companion to Miss Beauchamp, tells the police that Fred Reeves is the killer, but he is shot dead by a man who jumps on the running board of his car as soon as Sergeant Wilks and Inspector Martin of Scotland Yard begin to investigate the accusation. While the remaining members of the Esoterics live in dread, wondering who will be the next victim, a police sergeant is told to follow Lavinia Brown on one of her mysterious midnight journeys. Now read on.

EDWARD stood with Naomi on the pavement outside Councillor Stanton's house.

"You will let me see you home?" he asked.

She nodded without speaking. Her face was white under the lamp-light. Something stirred in Edward's mind—something which was new to him. Hitherto Naomi had been for him a good companion, standing firm on her feet. Now he saw her for the first time small and bewildered. A sudden feeling came over him which he found it difficult to admit.

"Naomi," he began and stopped, having no idea what he wanted to say. "Naomi, listen to me. I want you to get out of this business. It's too much for you. You're looking like a ghost. You'll be breaking down altogether if you're not careful."

"You want me to throw in my hand?"

"That's what I mean."

"Like Cyril Sidebotham? No thank you, Edward. I'm not yet beaten as low as that."

"Forget about Cyril. Your case is entirely different. I'm really anxious about you, my dear. If you don't recover your peace of mind——"

"What would be my peace of mind if I followed your advice? In any case I don't see how I or any one of us would be safer if we never touched another penny. If I am to be murdered for my money, Edward, the inference must be—now that Cyril has gone—that either you or Joshua is the murderer. No one else stands to gain by my decease. Your advice isn't even consistent with your own suggestion that Lavinia Brown is responsible. If she be the criminal—which I can't believe—she is not going to be turned aside by my ceasing to profit from the death of her friend."

"I wouldn't be too sure of that," protested Edward. "It must add considerably to her insane hatred of us all that we not only drove Valerie Beauchamp to her death—which is what she believes—but that we are in fact deriving a benefit. If one of us ceased to profit. . . ."

"For God's sake, Edward, are you in your sober senses? You are walking solemnly beside me, much too fast for comfort, and telling me that Lavinia Brown is sitting quietly at home in 'Avilion' and that every now and then she just runs out and murders one of us. The whole thing is impossible. In any case I am not going to follow the example of Cyril Sidebotham."

For a time there was silence. They were now approaching The Rosary. In another moment Naomi would be gone.

"Naomi."

"Yes, Edward."

"You don't realise, I suppose, that I'm probably the likeliest suspect."

He felt her arm trembling against his own. What did that mean? He stopped so abruptly that she was pulled to a halt. The light of a street lamp streamed down on her face. The eyes were wide and the mouth pinched.

"Edward, what an idea."

"We are pretty well acquainted, Naomi. But there are a good many things in my life of which you know nothing, and the things you do know are not all to my credit. It was I, for one thing, who started the hoax. I wanted to carry it further than was at all kind or decent. I admit that now to you though I shall not admit it to anyone else."

Suddenly he stood still and grasped her firmly by the shoulders.

"My dear," he said, "we are going to stand together now to the end. Say that is so."

"I've been saying nothing else ever since we left the meeting," said Naomi, not very steadily. "It's you that have been trying to put me off."

Edward found himself shaken. What was happening? He felt desperately sorry for Naomi and desperately in need of her.

"Then that's settled," he said.

(*continued on page* 24)

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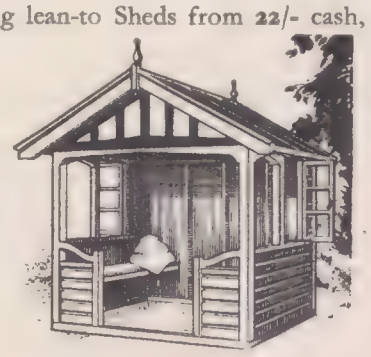

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5/- DOWN

Thorns "ERECTESI" *Garage*

Moulded weatherboard walls, in sections for bolting together, mortised and tenoned doors, **steel-braced** corners. Roofing felt and glass included. Guttering extra.

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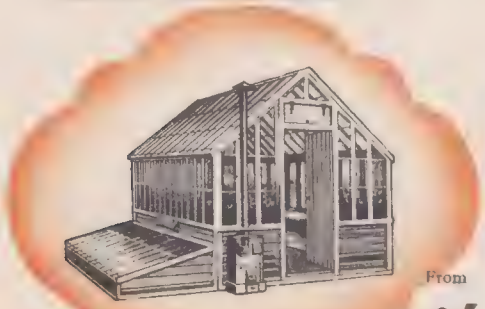

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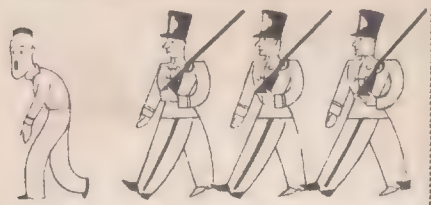

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Continuing The Legacy Murders

On a sudden impulse he bent towards her. She raised her face and he kissed her. Her lips moved responsively to the touch of his own.

Then, letting her go, he turned and walked quickly away.

"Short and sweet," said Constable Everett.

"Not much in the courtin' mood—what with one thing and another," responded his mate.

The two watchers from Scotland Yard stood motionless beneath the friendly shade of a sycamore tree.

"Off you go," said Everett, "and don't go losing sight of Master Calcott. Tempers these days at the Yard are mighty short."

* * *

"Anything to report, Sergeant?"

"Nothing, sir. Miss Brown left the house for two hours this morning in company with her friend, Mrs. Higham. All they did was a bit of shopping in the High Street."

"You searched the house?"

"No result, sir. We had three men on the job, sir, including Robson, but found nothing."

Martin sighed and shook his head. Robson was the Yard expert in the searching of rooms and if he had found nothing the usual inference was that there was nothing to find. Yet he felt sure that Lavinia Brown had a pistol. Researches put in motion at the Yard had revealed that Valerie Beauchamp had possessed such a weapon. The licence had been traced and the shop from which she had purchased it, and it was a pistol identical in calibre to that which had fired the bullet into Freddy Reeves.

"Mrs. Higham stayed to lunch, sir, and left in the afternoon."

"Thank you, Sergeant. You may go now. Inspector Crosby and I will carry on here."

Martin drew back into the shadow of the laurels from which he could keep an eye on both the main and side gates of the garden of "Avilion."

"Well," said Crosby cheerfully, "at least the night is warm and, if the old lady chooses to walk, the exercise will do us good."

"What about Stanton's alibi?". demanded Martin, as they stood together.

"Not by any means perfect. He might quite easily have left his house on the night of the murder."

"Any evidence that he did?"

Crosby shrugged his shoulders in the darkness.

"None whatever. A wasted day, my dear George. What about you?"

"Naomi Garnett's story sounds all right," said Martin. "But she doesn't even pretend to an alibi. By her own showing she only just missed being in at the death. I'm not yet entirely satisfied about Calcott, and Sidebotham is equally ambiguous. I've been round to Priory Mansions. The night-porter confirms that he was at home, but there is a very convenient fire escape outside the flats down which he might have slipped at any time. Not that I fancy him as a candidate. For one thing, he's quite a rich young man and in no need of money, having some fifteen hundred a year of his own. Furthermore, he had, as he proposed, renounced his claims to the legacy. The lawyer had a letter from him this afternoon."

Martin fell abruptly silent as Crosby touched his arm. Lavinia Brown was leaving the house. She came quickly down the garden path, wearing her black coat and skirt and carrying in her hand a black, shiny hand-bag.

"Come on," whispered Crosby, "we are going for a walk."

Lavinia Brown, on leaving the garden gate, turned to the right. Martin allowed her ten seconds and started to follow. Crosby had slipped away and would, he knew, keep to the other side of the road.

Martin, as he walked behind her, ran over in his mind the case against her. She had lived with Valerie Beauchamp for years. She was passionately devoted to her late friend. She had suffered keen remorse for the quarrel which had parted them on the last day that she had seen Valerie Beauchamp alive. She openly rejoiced as one by one the Esoterics met their deaths. She was wild in her speech and eccentric. She had been abroad on the morning of what Martin called in his mind the milk murder, and she had again been walking the streets when Freddy Reeves met his death.

But Martin had little opportunity for further speculation. Lavinia Brown was evidently going to give them a long run. She had led them to the main road but now, without hesitation, she left the highway and took to the heathlands bordering the woods, setting her face towards Willowmere. It was a dark night and Martin realised that it would need all his attention to keep her in view.

Whither was she leading them? Martin, trailing the slight dark figure over the grass, already made a guess at her destination.

Highwood Cemetery! Lavinia Brown was about to visit her dead friend.

For the next half-hour Martin, vaguely aware from time to time of Crosby somewhere near at hand, concentrated upon the chase. Once he lost touch altogether in a patch of uneven ground on which gorse and small trees grew provokingly. He dared not use his torch for fear of startling his quarry.

Then he saw her again, climbing against the skyline. She was making for the cemetery where it commanded the waste green land on its western edge.

Then finally he lost her altogether. Keeping straight on, however, he came to the cemetery wall and began to follow it round to his right. Suddenly he came upon a dark figure.

"That you, Martin?"

It was Crosby speaking.

"She's given us the slip," said Martin.

"No she hasn't," Crosby replied. "Come, look at this."

He scrambled over the wall and stood for a moment in the dark among the tombstones. Soon he heard a faint sound, a clink of metal, and he moved cautiously forward. Then he saw a light. It wavered over the surface of the ground some twenty feet away.

The light flashed at random for a moment and then stood still.

"She has lodged her pocket-lamp upon one of the stones," thought Martin.

Its beam, reflected from the white wall of a mausoleum, made a small circle of radiance in which Lavinia Brown was now clearly visible.

She was standing by a newly made grave—a long hump with the sods of turf pressed lightly down. Now she was bending over it and Martin could not see what she was doing. Soon, however, she drew herself erect, took up her torch, swept it round a moment to fix her whereabouts and then switched it off.

She was coming.

Martin moved aside and stood still as she passed looking neither to right nor left. He waited until he heard her at the wall and then approached the grave. Then he turned on his pocket-lamp and, approaching the grave, examined it carefully.

The flowers upon it were fresh, evidently renewed that day. At the head of it was a rose-bush standing in an earthenware pot on the spot where Lavinia Brown had seemed to be busy, and the bush was loose in the earth. Taking it by its thick stem he lifted it. It came away easily with all its roots.

Martin, thrusting a hand into the empty pot, touched something cold and hard.

He straightened himself.

In the palm of his hand lay a small automatic pistol.

* * *

"It's the shop bell, Pa. Shall I see to it?"

Mr. Busby pushed back his chair.

"I'd better go along," he said shortly.

Mr. Busby rose from the table resentfully. He would not trust Ethel further than was necessary. An honest girl, but her arithmetic and her notion of keeping accounts were quite hopeless. What they taught children at school nowadays, he could not imagine. Morris dancing—that was the latest craze. What was the use of it—in an ironmonger's shop, at any rate? And who was Morris, anyway? Didn't he make motor-cars?

Mr. Busby pushed open the door leading from the kitchen into the shop and went forward.

"Yes, sir, and what can I have the pleasure of . . ." began Mr. Busby, one hand caressing his shaven upper lip and the other resting on the counter.

The customer, a small dark man with tortoiseshell spectacles, was inspecting a board covered with green baize on which was hung a formidable assortment of knives.

"I want one of these," said the customer.

"Certainly, sir," answered Mr. Busby promptly. "Small or large? A knife to sharpen pencils?"

The customer shook his head.

"Larger than that," he answered. "I want a good big knife."

Mr. Busby dived beneath the counter and, after a short search, produced a cardboard box.

"There you are sir," he said, unwrapping a knife from its covering of paper and laying it on the counter.

The customer picked it up—a single blade in a leather sheath about six inches long.

"Is this English made?" asked the customer, withdrawing the knife from the sheath.

"I can't say that it is, sir," said Mr. Busby. "English manufacturers don't make that sort, sir. There's not much demand for them, you know. That is a German knife."

The customer was examining the blade and point of the knife with attention.

"How much?"

"Five and sixpence, sir, if you please."

"Then I will take it. You needn't trouble to wrap it up."

The customer laid two half-crowns and a sixpence on the counter, slipped the sheathed knife into his pocket and walked off.

"Good evening, sir," said Mr. Busby.

But the customer was already closing the shop door and did not answer.

"Not a very affable person," said Mr. Busby to himself as he returned to his supper.

* * *

Inspector Martin was moving swiftly through the tube to Highwood. He was feeling better this morning. Chief Inspector McPherson had admitted that the case against Lavinia Brown was promising and had agreed that the necessary action should be taken.

So here was Martin on his way to the house of Councillor Stanton, whose co-operation must now be invited.

Martin alighted at his destination and walked to the Councillor's house. He was shown into the drawing-room and Councillor Stanton joined him almost immediately.

Martin was shocked at his appearance. Scarcely more than a fortnight ago the Councillor had been one of the world's more cheerful spirits. But the rounded cheeks were sagging and there were dark pouches under the eyes.

"Please sit down, Inspector. Any new developments?"

"Yes, sir," said Martin.

He was sorry for the Councillor and glad that he had something to make him happy.

"I think, sir, we have got the criminal. I have come, in fact, to apply for a warrant."

Councillor Stanton's head went back.

"Really, Inspector."

"Lavinia Brown," said Martin.

The blood came into the old man's cheeks. His eyes lit with relief. He sat back in his chair.

"The Lord be thanked," he said in a low voice. "Please God we shall now be able to sleep safely in our beds again. What is the evidence, Inspector? You really have a prima facie case?"

(*continued on page* 26)

NEXT WEEK'S
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- Vingle Roe has written another of her famous romances of the Great North West that will appeal to everybody. Also there are stories by Will Scott and Simpson Stokes and another instalment of Francis Beeding's thriller.
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"This Course opens up new ways and means of getting on in life. It trains the imagination and self-confidence. It helps me to get the best out of life. It cheers me up, and makes me more determined than ever." **SCHOOLMASTER** (L.32321).

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Continuing The Legacy Murders

Martin nodded.

"I think so," he answered. "Here it is, anyway."

Martin thereupon briefly reviewed the considerations which had led him to trail Lavinia Brown to Highwood Cemetery and ended with an account of his discovery of the pistol.

He continued:

"Lavinia Brown was followed home and I interviewed her this morning. That unhappy woman has apparently lost the small hold she had upon her reason. She accounted for her strange conduct by saying that she had received a call from her dead friend to place the weapon on her grave. Valerie had need of it—she kept on saying—had need of it for a purpose."

Councillor Stanton, making out the warrant, paused a moment, pen in hand.

"I suppose there is no doubt whatever that the pistol you found is the weapon with which Freddy Reeves was killed?"

"I have sent it to our expert for confirmation. It is, of course, the pistol for which Valerie Beauchamp had a licence, and the bullet which killed Frederick Reeves was fired from a pistol of the same calibre. That, sir, is the case against her, and I think you will admit that it is good enough for a warrant."

Councillor Stanton took out his fountain-pen and signed his name with a flourish.

"I shall hold it in reserve," said Martin, pocketing the warrant, "pending further inquiries."

"You will need to connect her with the death of Adelaide Tring, I suppose?"

Martin nodded.

"That is so, sir," he agreed. "She was, as I have said, up and about on that occasion, and it was she who drew my attention to the fact that someone had that morning come from the greenhouse where Dr. Reeves keeps his drugs."

A maid had appeared at the door.

"Inspector Martin, sir. He is wanted on the telephone."

"Excuse me, sir," said Martin, and followed the maid into the hall.

The voice of Crosby came over the wire.

A few minutes later Martin returned to the drawing-room. He held in his hand the warrant which Councillor Stanton had signed. Decisively he tore it across and threw the pieces into the wastepaper basket.

"That was Scotland Yard speaking," he announced. "It seems that the bullet which killed Reeves could not possibly have been fired from the pistol in the possession of Lavinia Brown. Our expert is quite positive on the subject."

The Councillor's face fell and the light faded from his eyes.

"Then the case against her collapses?"

"She cannot possibly be charged."

"What will you do next, Inspector?"

"I am to see the Chief Inspector at once, and I am not looking forward to the interview."

"And then?"

"We shall have to begin again."

Chief Inspector McPherson looked at Martin across the desk.

"That," he said, "disposes of the Press. But there is worse to follow. I have just had a word from the Home Secretary. There are to be questions asked in the House to-night."

Martin looked squarely at the Chief Inspector.

"What do you want me to do, sir? We have been right through the case from start to finish. I have to confess myself for the moment entirely at a loss. Do you wish me to throw in my hand? It's the fortune of war and if my resignation will help you in any way——"

The Chief Inspector looked not unkindly at his subordinate. He had got beyond the stage of recrimination. The Yard was fighting now with its back to the wall and its men must stand together.

"Resignation," he grunted. "Stuff and nonsense. I saw the Assistant Commissioner this morning. I told him that you and Crosby were probably the two best men I've got for this particular job. I am still of that opinion and I don't give a tinker's curse for all this."

With a sweep of his big hand, he sent half-a-dozen newspapers to the floor.

"The Yard is strong enough and old enough and sound enough to stand any amount of newspaper criticism. But I have got to be satisfied that there is nothing more we can do. I'm not blaming anybody, but our record in this case is as bad as it could be. First we build up a pretty little case against that fellow Reeves. It looked quite nice on paper. Then a hole is blown clean through it by the bullet that killed him. You look for the gun that fired the bullet and think you have found it in the possession of Lavinia Brown. You even go to one of the suspects for a warrant—without, let me remind you, so much as waiting for Clinker's report."

"That, I admit, was a mistake, sir," said Martin.

"Now we are beginning again. Where and how do we start?"

"Give me twenty-four hours," said Martin.

The Chief Inspector waved an enormous hand.

"Get out," he said shortly, "and get on with it."

Martin, moving towards the door, noticed a typewritten sheet on the floor among the scattered newspapers. He picked it up. It was a list of missing persons which had fallen from the desk. Missing persons—that had been his old department. Would he, perhaps, be driven to return to it?

How well he knew those lists, typed in violet ink! Davenport, Henry William, height 5 feet 8 inches, and then a description of his physical appearance and peculiarities and what he was wearing and where he had last been seen. Kidderminster. Hamsworth, Elizabeth, last heard of in Kingston. Origin, Sydney, Australia.

Martin laid the sheet on the desk and walked out. He was in a mood of black depression as he moved down the corridor to the room he shared with Crosby, who was still out. He moved to his desk and began to look through his reports.

First came a list of all persons possessing a pistol of .250 calibre. Their names appeared to be legion and they were scattered over the length and breadth of the British Isles. Martin had begun to classify them according to the districts in which they lived, when the telephone rang. It was the sergeant at the reception-desk speaking.

"There's a party 'ere, sir. Says she has got information . . . yes, sir . . . the 'Ighwood cases . . . says she wants to speak personally to the officer in charge . . . name of Mary Andrews."

"Show her up, Sergeant," said Martin,

The door opened presently. The woman who entered was tall with a shock of red hair and she was dressed in a knitted silk frock of brilliant green. Martin, with interest, identified her as the florid cook whom he had heard at 255 High Street, having a difference of opinion with Mrs. Calcott, mother of Edward Calcott, on the subject of her neuralgia.

"Miss Andrews?" he said politely.

"That's me," affirmed his visitor.

Martin pointed to a chair.

"Please sit down. If I'm not mistaken, Miss Andrews, we have met before?"

"That's right, Inspector, and that's what I've come to see you about."

"You are, if I remember, in the service of Mrs. Calcott?"

"I *was* in the service of Mrs. Calcott."

Martin noted the aggressive inflection and the sense of grievance that prompted it.

"You have parted company, then?"

"Dismissed—without a character and after what I done for her."

"Would it be indiscreet to inquire what it was that you did for her, Miss Andrews?"

"That's what I've come to tell you Inspector, seeing that it's on my conscience."

The woman sat forward in her chair and began to nod her head impressively.

"It's like this, Inspector. You came the other day, Wednesday, wasn't it, the day after poor Mr. Reeves was shot? You asked where Master Edward had been that night. Not me, but 'is mother."

"I remember perfectly well. Mrs. Calcott said that her son had gone to bed at about half-past ten and you confirmed her statement."

"That I never did, Inspector. I 'eard what she said to you, being in the kitchen and the wall being lath and plaster. But I did not confirm it—not in so many words. But when she had me into the room you asked me when I called his lordship and I said at 'alf-past seven with a cup of tea. Those were my words, Inspector. 'Alf-past seven with a cup of tea. And I also said I 'adn't seen 'im since dinner the night before. And that was the truth.

"I never told a lie—not in so many words. But if it wasn't a lie, it was, as you might say, next door to it. It was true that I never saw Mr. Edward again that night. But I 'eard 'is latchkey in the door, Inspector, and what's more, I didn't contradict the mistress, who said that Mr. Edward was in bed and asleep all those hours. Which is misleading, out of being faithful to the mistress, and is on my conscience, me being afterwards discharged without a character."

"You say that you *heard* Mr. Edward. Do you mean that he left the house?"

"That's just what I do mean. He went to his bedroom and he said good night to his mother. But he didn't go to bed, or, if he did, he got up again quite soon."

"You saw him leave the house?"

"I *'eard* 'im leave the house, and when he 'ad left the house I went into the 'all and his black 'at was missing off the peg."

"What time would that be, Miss Andrews?"

"I can't tell you the exact time, Inspector, but it was not afore eleven and not later than 'alf-past."

"Do you know when he returned?"

"I was still nursing my neuralgia when I 'eard 'im come back. And I said to myself, that must be Master Edward. At his tricks again, I said. And I looked at the clock on the mantelpiece, and it was 'alf-past two in the morning."

"You would be prepared to sign a statement, Miss Andrews?"

"On my Bible oath."

"So you said to youself: that must be Master Edward—at his tricks again. What exactly did you mean by that?"

"It means what it says, Inspector. That was not the first time Master Edward was out unknown to his mother."

"Can you tell me of any other occasions?"

"I can't give you no dates, Inspector—it being, as you might say, an 'abit with 'im."

"Is he usually long away on these occasions?"

"Only during these last few weeks, Inspector."

There was a short silence.

"Is that all you have to tell me, Miss Andrews?"

"That's all, Inspector, and I'm glad it's off my mind."

She paused.

"Tell me, Inspector. Is this likely to be used in hevidence?"

"That will depend on circumstances. I shall, of course, be obliged to communicate what you have just told me to Mr. Calcott and I shall ask him to account for his absences from home during the period of the crimes. Meanwhile, if you will kindly wait a moment, I will send for a stenographer. I shall dictate a summary of the information which you have just given and ask you to sign it."

Miss Andrews sat back decisively in her chair.

"I'll sign, it, Inspector. I'll sign it with pleasure—'oping to serve the cause of Justice, which is why I came."

"Coming In?"

CALLING this invitation to his friends, the man poised on the river bank dived gracefully into the water. But it was shallower than he imagined. He struck a submerged rock and broke a bone in his shoulder.

Before the fracture mended there were weeks of anxiety for his wife, to say nothing of the extra strain placed upon the family's resources.

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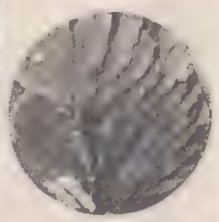

Texture
ordinary chocolate
(*magnified*)

A solid mass which tends to lumpiness when eaten; the common cause of the cloying effect of many chocolates.

A WIFE *on the* *Ocean Wave*

WOMAN to WOMAN by Isabel Aldridge

"CRUISING clothes for madam," said the elegant shop walker, waving me into a luxurious armchair.

A slim young thing, with non-existent hips, glided forward.

"Good afternoon, madam," she said. "What exactly were you thinking of?"

I was really a little vague myself on this point.

"Well, to start with," I replied, "I want a new bathing costume."

"Something after this style?" the sylph enquired, indicating a tiny wisp of pink wool that tied round the back of the neck and had no connection whatever with the briefest pair of matching shorts I had ever seen. Visualising Stanley's look of horror when I appeared before him with at least six inches of waist exposed, I hastened to explain that I had in mind something just a little more restrained.

"I brought this with me," I said, handing the girl my old bathing costume that had given me five years' good wear, "because I've always liked it and I thought I might get something similar."

With obvious distaste, she held the garment between a coral-tipped finger and thumb. Then, with a slightly superior air, she said emphatically: "Oh, *no*, madam. We couldn't repeat this model. It's a regulation costume and nobody would think of wearing anything but a backless swim-suit to-day."

I hurriedly concealed my despised friend and tried to picture myself in the jade green trifle held up for my inspection. It consisted of two diminutive cones joined with an almost alarming economy of material to a pair of shorts covered by a brief skirt.

The addition of the latter seemed to me only to emphasise the amazing lack of accommodatoin provided for the upper part of the body.

I realised gradually that not only was my bathing costume out of date, but also so was my figure. I despaired of being able to squeeze it into any of the swim-suits displayed before me. It began to be obvious to me why the department was staffed with young females whose womanly curves were so immature.

When I voiced these fears to my assistant, she hastened to assure me that they were entirely groundless.

"Of course, madam," she said, looking at me coolly and critically, "you are perhaps a little heavy in the bust, and just a trifle short-waisted, but these spring-knit models mould the figure to the correct modern silhouette."

Bitterly I accepted her description of my figure as being correct, having no doubt she could tell at a glance the exact position a waist should occupy. I merely registered a little prayer of thankfulness that Stanley was still of the opinion that flat-chested females were abhorrent and that it was a pity Venus de Milo hadn't lived long enough to get a few hints on beauty from me.

However, she prevailed upon me to try on some of the least daring swim-suits. To my astonishment, they really did do a little figure moulding. They held me firmly just where I needed support, and miraculously slenderised my waist. So delighted was I with the glimpses of myself I caught in the triple mirrors of the fitting room, that only the greatest self-control prevented my trying on the pink brassière costume which I had seen first of all.

Fortunately I retained sufficient sanity to realise that with the bare space between shorts and top, there would be nothing left to mould the curves which insist on displaying themselves around my waist.

I settled on a backless costume in black and white chevron stripes with cross-over straps at the back. After this, I felt I had better leave myself entirely in the hands of the hipless young woman, as she seemed to possess an uncanny knack of knowing what kind of garments suited my figure. And mine is the kind of figure that every year needs more and more understanding.

"Madam will, of course, need two or three pairs of shorts and various sun toppers," she began.

"Sun toppers?" I murmured, with visions of myself arrayed in little short trunks and a white top hat, a costume that film stars affect when about to burst into song and a particularly strenuous tap dance—neither of which activities had been mentioned to me when I booked my cruise.

"They are really large silk handkerchiefs which tie round the waist and the back of

● Whether physical exercising with the ship's instructor, gaming on deck, or recreating in any of the other pastimes of a sea cruise, a woman needs clothes—different clothes.

the neck," she explained, deftly draping her own slender body in a brilliantly striped one.

I decided that I might appear to better advantage in something a little less blatant, while cursing a cruel fate, not by any means for the first time, that had caused me to live in an age when fashions are created for the boyish figure, when I was so obviously designed to decorate the Gibson girl period.

By easy stages we passed from shorts to longs. Apparently it was impossible to go on a cruise unless one were equipped with trousers of every length.

"For cooler days, madam," my sylph insisted firmly, "when it will be too cold to wear shorts for deck games."

As I had had no intention up till then of indulging in anything so infantile as deck quoits or shuffle board, I voiced a small protest, but the young woman was so certain that once on board all such scruples would disappear, that I found myself the possessor of a most nautical looking pair of slacks.

"Of course," said the assistant, who by now had taken complete control of me, "you will need some culottes for promenading the deck."

Culottes, it appeared, were the very last word in shipboard attire. They comprised an all-in-one garment looking like a frock but were actually a pair of trousers that came half-way down the calf.

I snatched at the opportunity of acquiring something that at least might be mistaken for a dress.

Any yearning toward femininity on my part, I realised, would have to be sternly suppressed most of the time I was cruising. Until eight bells (or however many they ring to signify dinner is served in a ship) I should have to stride manfully about my pursuits in one of my varied selection of trousers.

But when evening came, fashion dictated that females on the ocean should be adorned in the fussiest and frilliest frocks possible.

The hipless one waxed quite lyrical over the vision of me dressed in a flowery taffeta picture gown with a billowing skirt, and even *I* thought I looked quite passable in a blue and white spotted organdie with enormous puff sleeves and no back.

By this time I was more or less in a comatose state and capable merely of agreement.

I no longer argued—I merely acquired garments without which it would be impossible to cruise. These included a white linen suit for going ashore at ports of call, with various contrasting jumpers, and a white pull-on hat to complete the outfit. A camel hair coat was voted the only possible wear for travelling and deck use.

"Madam will have shoes to go with each ensemble?"

Madam did—natty brown and white buckskin for the linen suit, toeless sandals with cork soles and heels for culottes and slacks, tennis shoes for deck games, high-heeled silver court shoes for the taffeta evening frock, and white crêpe for the organdie.

"A smart mackintosh and a beret will complete the outfit, I think," murmured the hipless one, gazing with vicarious anticipation at the array of clothes which I was apparently going to wear.

"A plain white mackintosh will do," I said, firmly, as I saw her eyeing a vivid scarlet one with check facings. One thing, at least, in my cruising outfit should be restrained. Regretfully, she gave way on the point.

I sighed as I left the shop, yearning for the days when one could buy a few cotton frocks and a regulation bathing costume and be thoroughly equipped for a fortnight's holiday.

I felt sure that my slender saleswoman would have looked so much more ravishing in my cruising clothes than I would myself. As I pack my trunk I look round guiltily. Thankfully I realise that the hipless one cannot possibly see that I am tucking my old bathing costume into a corner of it. It looks rather pathetic between a pair of culottes and a spotted sun topper.

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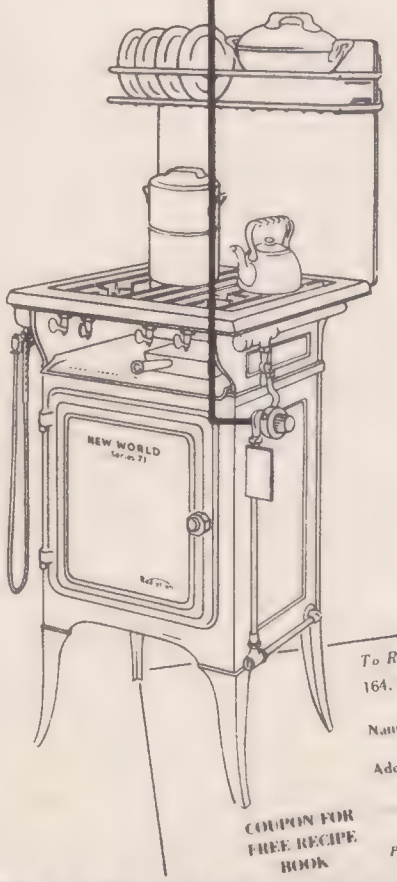

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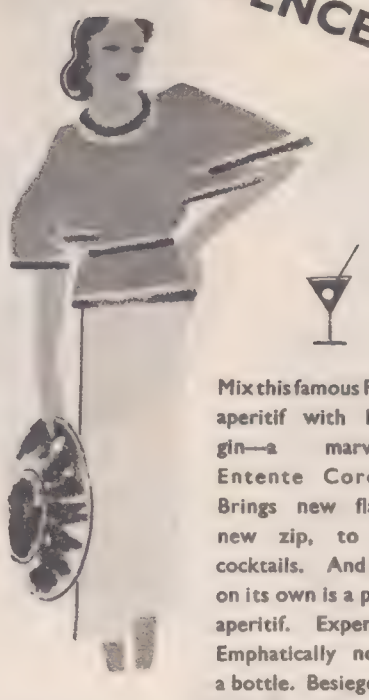

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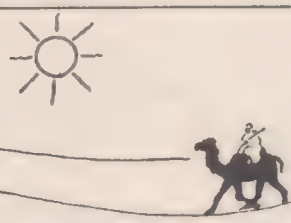
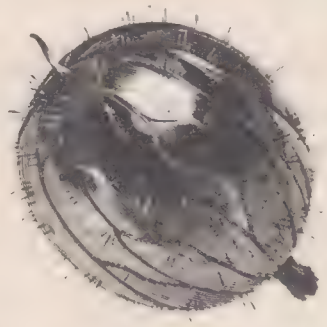


A camel can go 7 days without a drink . . . but—



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GarJ P8

His

● "I've had a hard day and I'm tired—who is it exactly you have invited to dinner?"

A COMPLETE STORY

by *W. A. Sweeney*

ILLUSTRATED BY W. J. TURNER

MR. CRAMM had finished his dinner and his wife was watching him as he arose and began to move about the room in the restless manner peculiar to the great carnivora and to men when they are thinking of going out.

"I wish this deal with Peterson was through and done with," he remarked.

"You don't mean to say you have to go out again to-night to see that man Peterson?" demanded Mrs. Cramm.

"That's just what I mean to say."

"Every night for the past month you've had to go to Peterson's," went on his wife, protestingly.

"It can't be helped. Big business cannot be disposed of in five minutes. We have months of work before us. He told me this afternoon that he has received the plans and we must study them together to-night. After that, if the deal goes through, we shall have to re-explain and discuss the project with every member of Peterson's company. Heaven knows when I shall have an evening free."

"If that business interests this man Peterson as much as it does you, he has as much to win, hasn't he? Why should *you* always have to go to *him*? Couldn't he come here for a change? I shan't be in the way if you wish to talk business. As far as that goes you could invite him to dinner. Why should *you* have to do all the trotting round to him?"

"For the simple reason that I wouldn't have him in my house," replied Cramm, shortly.

"Good gracious! Why not?"

"His manners are of the gutter and his very appearance an offence to the eye. His language would bring a flush—of envy or of shame—to the cheek of the most irascible bargee that ever delivered himself of an opinion afloat. I am not mealy-mouthed, but there are limits."

"Good heavens!" Mrs. Cramm shuddered. "What disgusting people you do business with! Well, don't be too late, anyway."

"I probably shall be very late, unfortunately. The gargoyle Peterson suffers from insomnia, among his other troubles, and has no consideration for people who sleep o' nights. However, don't wait up for me, but go to bed. I'll be home as early as I can."

Mr. Cramm left his house and walked to where he would get a 'bus, with an enigmatical little smile playing round the corners of his mouth. He boarded his 'bus and got off opposite a certain discreet-looking little hotel and public house. On the 'bus he had been thinking pleasantly of Peterson.

During twenty years, approximately, of married life, it had filtered through to his understanding that to go out after dinner in the evenings and pass a hospitable moment with the boys was an open declaration of hostilities between him and Mrs. Cramm. They were a very short time married when she, symbolically, wrote the abandon-hope-all-ye-who-enter-here device over the portals of the conjugal residence.

After the first, fine frenzy of the newly-married state, Mr. Cramm's thoughts had turned towards a certain club he belonged to, where he was wont to take his ease in the evenings, but, when he broached the matter, Mrs. Cramm decreed, in no equivocal manner, that he must resign from that club forthwith, and that the man's place was in the home in the evenings. From time to time, however, by strategy, ruse and cunning, he had managed, during the years, to escape for one evening and indulge in his undying passion for a game of poker and drinks with the companions of his march to commercial prosperity.

But only for an evening now and then—until he thought of Peterson. He estimated, seriously and modestly, that Peterson was an idea of genius. Nothing less. He entered the little public house, saluted the landlord, and made his way to the bar parlour at the rear of the premises, where, near a snug fire, a group of prosperous-looking men of his own age were seated at a table with whiskies before them.

"A whisky and soda—double," he ordered, and greeted the company. About closing time, or whenever they wished, this little group were in the habit of withdrawing to a private room of the landlord's, upstairs, where they could play cards till any hour they liked.

"I had a bit of a job to get out to-night," said a portly man smoking a cigar. "My wife wanted me to take her to some play or other. Plays bore me stiff. I'm afraid I'll have to stay at home to-morrow night, though; some dashed people coming to dinner."

"You should find Peterson," Mr. Cramm said, enigmatically. "Or develop him."

The fat man with the cigar stared at him, as did the others. "Who the deuce is Peterson?" he demanded.

"Peterson," said Mr. Cramm, leaning back and thinking, "is about fifty years of age, fat, dirty in his personal habits, uses disgusting language, is selfish, insulting, possesses a bulbous nose and a revolting excrescence on the left side of his face—if you can call it a face. His manners are of the gutter, and he is unfit to consort with civilised beings."

"What is he?" grunted another member of the company. "The leading man in *Trusting Hearts*?"

Mr. Cramm chuckled. "He is an important man of business with whom I spend my evenings discussing vast enterprises," he replied, and then he proceeded to explain Peterson more clearly.

"And you mean to tell us that there is no such person as this Peterson at all?" asked the fat man, dazzled.

"Not that I know of," replied Mr. Cramm, waving for another round of drinks. "But he is going to keep me busy for months in the evenings, bless his ugly countenance."

"I'll admit it's brilliant," breathed the fat man, gazing with awesome admiration at Mr. Cramm.

That gentleman glanced at the clock. "What about a friendly hand?" he asked. The others nodded and, carrying their drinks, disappeared through a door that led to the landlord's private quarters upstairs.

As Mr. Cramm had joined his companions, flushed with triumph and glancing neither to left nor right, he had not perceived a young man sitting behind a newspaper in a corner of the bar parlour. This young man (whose name was Medder) had, however, perceived and recognised Mr. Cramm. When the others had departed he sat smoking a thoughtful cigarette and his thoughts ran as follows:

"And that's the old snake who sacked me from his office because he caught me sparring a friendly round with the office boy. Deceiving his wife and boozing here every night, and playing cards!"

Mr. Medder sat thinking. He had not found another job yet (since two months previously when his connection with Mr. Cramm had been severed) and adversity had sharpened his wits. As he sat ponder-

SILENT Partner

ing there came to him an idea, and the more he thought over it and saw it develop, the more he felt like Shakespeare musing over the outlines of Hamlet (for example) taking misty shape before his mind's eye.

The following afternoon about four o'clock he presented himself at Mr. Cramm's private residence and asked to see Mrs. Cramm.

"The name," he said, "is Peterson. I have a message for my friend, Mr. Cramm."

Mrs. Cramm came from upstairs with emotions that were a mixture of repugnance and curiosity. She entered the room expecting to gaze on a face and personality that would have made Stevenson's Mr. Hyde shine like a soldier-hero in a melodrama, and found herself confronting a remarkably good-looking young man of about twenty-three.

"Mr. P-Peterson!" she gasped, searching for the escrescence, and the soup-stains on the waistcoat.

"Mrs. Cramm," said Mr. Medder, bowing and smiling. "I trust you will excuse me, but I had a message for your husband, and as I was passing by your house, I thought I would deliver it personally."

"You are—you are the Mr. Peterson who is engaged in a business enterprise with my husband?" stammered Mrs. Cramm.

"Precisely," replied Mr. Medder. "And I telephoned him at his office a little while ago, but he was absent. As our affairs are at a stage where the strictest secrecy regarding our relations must be observed, I left no message with any of his subordinates and, as I was passing this way in any case, on my way home, I took the liberty of calling personally."

"You are—you are Mr. Peterson's son?" questioned Mrs. Cramm, still groping for light. Where, oh where was the bulbous nose?

"Certainly I am Mr. Peterson's son," replied Mr. Medder, with his very charming smile which made Mrs. Cramm smile too, in spite of herself.

"Ah," she said, "that explains it. Your father sent you, no doubt."

"Mrs. Cramm," said Medder, earnestly. "I'm afraid I don't understand you. My father died two years ago."

Mrs. Cramm took a deep breath. "And it is to you, Mr. Peterson, my husband goes in the evenings to discuss this—this business——"

"For that I must humbly present my excuses, Mrs. Cramm," said Medder, "but it is a big affair, and though I regret infinitely to deprive you of your husband's company, we have so little opportunity otherwise——"

"Not at all," Mr. Peterson," murmured Mrs. Cramm. "But I shall not forgive my husband readily for not inviting you to visit us before. He has often spoken of you and I did not imagine—that is, I gathered you were rather shy." She smiled her most charming smile. "He tells me you are a very busy man."

"It is true I have not much leisure," murmured Medder. "Business——"

"I know," said Mrs. Cramm, "nevertheless you would be giving us a great pleasure to have dinner with us one of these evenings. You can talk as much business as you wish. I shall leave you to your affairs. Do say you will come."

"It is difficult to refuse you, Mrs. Cramm," replied Medder in his most distinguished manner. The lady's eyes shone.

"Would you be so kind," went on Medder, "as to tell your husband that I have been called out of town for three days and that I cannot keep our appointment for to-night?"

"I shall tell him. And that means you will be back on Thursday. And when can you come and dine with us, Mr. Peterson? Shall we say Thursday evening?"

Medder seemed to reflect an instant. Then he smiled. "Thank you, Mrs. Cramm," he said, "I shall come on Thursday with pleasure."

Mr. Cramm was nearing the end of his soup that evening when his wife said:

"You are going out again this evening?"

"Have to see Peterson again," muttered Cramm, spooning his *creme de tomate*.

A short silence. "What age did you say he was, again?"

"About fifty, I told you."

"And ugly?"

"Ugly enough to be in a circus."

"You take me for an idiot!" hissed Mrs. Cramm across the table. Her husband dropped his spoon and gazed into her outraged eyes.

"Eh?"

"I say, you take me for a fool. I have seen your Mr. Peterson."

"What's that?" whispered Cramm, leaning across the table unable to believe his senses.

"I tell you I have seen him. Why did you stuff my head with a tissue of lies?" Mrs. Cramm's voice rose to a dangerous pitch. "For a month you have been lying to me."

"You say you have seen him?" gasped Cramm, wondering whether he or his wife was giving way mentally.

"He was here to-day. He is going away for three days and you are not to call to-night. Moreover, I have invited him to dine with us on Thursday."

"You have—you have invited him—Peterson—to dine with us?"

"Don't sit gasping and gaping like a fish," retorted Mrs. Cramm, with increasing anger. "What I want to know is—what was the idea in your silly head to tell me those lies?"

"Lies?" echoed Cramm, feebly, completely and absolutely lost, and gazing around him blankly.

"About his age, his physical appearance. Were you *jealous*, by any chance? Was that why you wouldn't have him come to the house?"

"Jealous?" Mr. Cramm, weltering in a sea of insane mysteries, clung to this word as to a floating spar. "Perhaps—perhaps that was it, Amelia, perhaps I was a little jealous. It's a—it's a human failing, after all, and—and——"

"Clown!" ejaculated Mrs. Cramm. "I believe you're beginning to suffer from senile decay already! I've had my suspicions for years that you had the germs of jealousy in your composition. Do you think that I am likely to fall for any good-looking man that may happen to come to the house, idiot?"

Mr. Cramm staggered to his feet, crossed to the mantelpiece and wiped his brow. He looked at the fireplace with a silly sort of smile on his face like a man whose reason is tottering on its throne. Mrs. Cramm went on and on and the farther she went the denser grew the crazy clouds round her husband's brain.

"Listen, my dear," he managed to interrupt at last. "I've had a hard day to-day and I'm tired, very tired." He put his hand to his head. "Very hard day to-day, and I want to go to bed. But—excuse me—but tell me again—who is it exactly you have invited to dinner?"

"*Peterson!*" cried his wife. She regarded him critically. "I really *do* believe there's something wrong with your brain. You'd better go to bed."

"Ah, Peterson, of course," murmured Cramm. "Yes, I think I'll retire."

The mental wrestlings of Mr. Cramm until Thursday came cannot be described here. They would fill a literary curiosity about the size of the Domesday Book. He walked about like a man under the influence of some strange drug that dulls the reason. He was seen to stop in the street now and again, reflect, shake his head and then walk on staring blankly before him.

On Thursday evening he went home as early as possible and found the table in the dining-room tastefully decorated with fresh flowers and his wife in a smart frock. He was ordered to smarten himself somewhat in honour of his guest, and he retired to his room obediently. When he came down again, the maid announced the arrival of Mr. Peterson. Steadying himself with an effort, Cramm entered the dining-room to meet him—and found himself facing Medder.

"Ah, good evening, Cramm," said Medder, affably. "Most kind of Mrs. Cramm to have invited me to-night. I just got back this afternoon, as a matter of fact."

"How are you—P-Peterson?" stammered Cramm. The room was swimming round him. He took a breath, looked at the ground and then saw his wife regarding him frowningly. "Had a—a good journey?" he managed to articulate.

"The journey was all right, but the weather in the north—brrrh!" Medder smiled his charming smile and so did Mrs. Cramm. They sat down to dinner.

Cramm couldn't tell you to this day what they talked about during that repast, no more than he could tell you what they ate, though the eatables were of a superior order. After the coffee Mrs. Cramm said, sweetly:

"Now I suppose you two are dying to talk business, so I'll leave you," and with her sweetest smile she left the men alone.

Mr. Cramm arose and walked to the door, first of all, to make absolutely certain that it was properly closed. Medder toyed with a glass of port, until Cramm returned.

"Now," said Cramm, "what's the meaning of this?"

"I heard you in the hotel the other night," said Medder, simply. "So I decided to do the Peterson act. I haven't been eating too well of late, since you gave me the sack, and that dinner to-night was a topper." He sipped his port.

"You know," said Cramm, savagely, "that I could prosecute you for this?"

"You can hardly do so now after having let me eat it, knowing who I was," replied Medder, calmly. "Besides, you would be in a queer fix yourself, wouldn't you? I should imagine Mrs. Cramm—a charming lady, by the way—is already somewhat exasperated by your—er—lying description of me—or Peterson—and further explanations would be very disagreeable for you."

Mr. Cramm breathed deeply. "And what do you intend to do?" he inquired.

"Keep on being Peterson and come to dine from time to time—on conditions," said Mr. Medder, tipping his cigar ash into the tray. "You *need* a Peterson—I'm going to be him. Otherwise I shall sell my business—or retire—and go and live in Manchester, or somewhere, the home of my fathers, and I shall call and make my adieux to your wife before I depart. If I stay here, of course, you will be invited to come to my place frequently in the evenings—to talk business. I shall invite you and your wife from time to time to dine in a restaurant—being a bachelor."

Mr. Cramm controlled himself with an effort. "And what are your damned conditions?" he demanded in low, dangerous tones.

"My job back again, that's all. On my part I promise absolute secrecy and complete loyalty to the arrangement. Is it a deal?"

Mr. Cramm arose and walked about the room. Then he strode towards the door.

"I'll go and tell my wife you're going," he growled. "Yes, it's a deal—but you're going to refuse, on some pretext or other, nearly all the invitations that will be dispatched to you. Understand?"

"O.K. for me," said Medder.

"Come to the office to-morrow," said Mr. Cramm.

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CALL BOX

THERE is nothing more brittle and unsafe to the tread than the path of pretence. Once you embark upon it, everything and everyone seem to conspire to make your journey more and more difficult. That was my experience when I was foolish enough to make a serious lapse from the road of honesty.

And then the reason behind that lapse was mainly that I had been falsely suspected of dishonesty. I was held responsible for the disappearance of a considerable sum of money, left in my keeping by the firm with whom I had long been employed.

It was believed, in fact, that I had stolen it, but as there was no absolute evidence against me, and because the firm was of the type that hesitates before taking criminal proceedings, the matter was not pressed. I was simply told to take my hat and coat to a berth somewhere else.

It was made clear that I need not hesitate to ask for a reference from my late employer, who admitted that I could legally only be accused of negligence. And there seemed no reason at all why I should not find a post almost, if not as good, in the same rather specialised line.

I had been married a year and we were expecting an addition to the family. That, I think, was why I decided to tell my wife nothing of what had happened.

There was no trouble about money, for I had inherited money and property through the death of an aunt. It was partly because I felt so safe in that respect, so sure of quickly finding work again, that I concealed the truth from my wife. The real point was that I could not bring myself to tell her why I had been obliged to leave. I knew how unhappy it would make her.

So it was an innocent and well-meant deception from the beginning. Every day, as she believed, I went to office and returned again at the usual hour, whereas actually I spent the time trying to find the new berth I imagined to be only just round the next corner. But a month went by without even the faintest sign of my finding work.

And by now that brittle and unsafe path of pretence had made me furious with myself for ever having taken my first step along it. For I had been forced into telling my wife so many lies—for the sake of her own happiness, as I had fondly imagined—that I was ashamed and now seriously worried. Yet, having gone so far, how was I to turn back?

That was the question I was asking myself one afternoon when a telephone rang. . . .

It was a telephone in a call-box. I had gone to Croydon to interview a man to whom I had received a personal introduction. The interview had been productive of nothing definite and I was left still hoping. And, with time on my hands, I had been sitting in a park, trying to enjoy the sunshine, but really feeling far from enjoying anything at all.

I had just left the park when I heard the whirring sound of that telephone within the scarlet call-box. It was not my business, of course, to do anything about it. At the time, I merely felt a certain amusement over the thought that someone at the other end of the wire little knew what a blank he was drawing.

I had a feeling that it would be only a kindness to let the person ringing know he was wasting time, and so I made up my mind to act the Good Samaritan.

Stepping into the kiosk, I took down the receiver, saying something to indicate my existence at that end of the wire. It was, I saw, an instrument of the dial-automatic type. In a flash, I was answered by a woman's voice. It was so low-pitched and so terribly poignant in tone that, for a moment, I was startled.

"Thank heaven you're there, George," I heard the voice breathing excitedly. "I thought you were never going to answer. Listen . . . For God's sake get to us as quickly as you can. We're at the 14 Jelk Street address. You know—near West Croydon Station. Plans had to be changed. Bert pulled that job off all right, only the car crashed and he's hurt. The police——"

Here, as she paused breathlessly for an instant, I managed to interrupt the woman. I let her understand that I wasn't George, whoever he might be, that this was a public call-box and she must have dialled the wrong number. At first, after I had said my bit, there was a stony silence.

Then I heard her stifling a little exclamation of alarm, heard her saying to somebody under her breath:—

"Sakes, Bert! What have I done? It isn't George at the other end! It's——"

I heard no more. The wire was dead. She had wasted no time in disconnecting. So I went out of the kiosk to continue my walk, just as though the thing hadn't happened, arguing that it was none of my business. Second thoughts, however, gave me to pause and consider the matter more closely.

But the poignancy of that unknown woman's voice rather shook my belief that I should do nothing about it. Supposing,

---

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CRIME

I asked myself, the thing had a criminal background? It would obviously be my duty to take some sort of action.

I remembered then that the unknown woman had given her supposed George an address to which to go. There could be no harm, I told myself, in going there and having a look round. The place proved to be a derelict-looking motor-repair shop and garage, with rooms above it. At a first-floor window a pale-faced woman with raven-black hair looked out anxiously. Probably, I thought, my lady of the 'phone.

But as the occupants of the premises proved to be in the motor business, it seemed to me less likely than ever that there could have been anything sinister behind the message I had intercepted. Still, I could not help remembering the alarm in that woman's voice when she learnt that I was not George, and the abrupt way in which she had rung off.

She was looking very alarmed now. Two policemen lumbered slowly into sight along the pavement, and came to a standstill at a nearby corner, talking to each other while appearing to be interested in these particular premises. I saw that, having spoken to someone behind her in the room, she shrank from sight, peering out between the curtains.

It was her furtive anxiety, suggesting a definite fear of the law, that prompted me presently to stroll over to those two policemen and tell them my story. They listened, at first with an amused scorn, and then suddenly they grew more interested and serious. One of them, interrupting me, said sharply to the other:

"Why, mate, it might well be to do with that damaged car found at Thornton Heath a couple of hours since!"

"In which case, we may have stumbled, accidental-like, on the very man who's wanted," said the other, leaving me still in the dark as to what was meant, beyond saying to me: "If you don't mind, mister, standing by for a moment——"

I noticed that he had signalled a police car, coming towards us at the moment, and when it stopped the two constables engaged in a low-voiced discussion with the officers in it. They looked up at the motor-repair premises, and then at me, beckoning me. I had to repeat my story to the senior of the men in the car, and then he got out. There was another brief talk in undertones, and the chief one said:

"Anyhow, a few questions won't do any harm, if they've nothing to hide."

As they moved towards the motor repair place, I saw that the woman behind the curtains had disappeared in obvious panic. . . .

I followed the police to the place, watched while they went into the garage, and presently saw that the pale-faced woman was talking to them. I saw, too, that a man with her was on the point of leaving when the police stood in his way.

A moment later he came racing towards me with my two police friends at his heels. His white face flashed by me before I could do anything. And, if he had not collided with a man on the pavement, he might have got away. Instead, the police grabbed him and brought him back.

In the end, asked to accompany the police in their car to the station, I discovered what all this was about. Earlier in the day there had been a jewel robbery in the West End, the bandit escaping in a car that had later been found, damaged and deserted (it was a stolen car, anyhow), at Thornton Heath. It proved that the driver had been the man, spoken of as Bert by the woman on the telephone, who had been badly hurt but had managed to reached the motor repair premises.

The other man, a confederate, was the man George, for whom the woman had mistaken me on the 'phone. He had the stolen jewels on him when he was stopped by the policemen. As for me, the police could not praise me sufficiently for my small part in the capture.

There was, however, another side to the matter about which I had given no thought until now, when it was quite clear I could not escape all the publicity for myself which must inevitably follow my connection with this affair.

It meant that I should have to tell my wife the truth at last about my lost job, explaining how I happened to be at such a place as Croydon when she would have believed me at the city office. I went home that night, feeling conscience-stricken and remorseful when I began to break the news to her.

Much to my surprise, and certainly to my delight, she was neither so upset nor so reproachful as I had expected.

"If they could really believe for a moment, dear, that you could be capable of stealing even a penny, that old firm of yours wouldn't be worth working for, anyhow," she said to me. "As for a new job, you'll soon get one."

But, it proved, there was no need for that. Not many days later, a letter came from the head of my old firm asking me to call and see him.

I met a very humiliated man indeed, only too eager to recompense me for earlier ill-founded suspicions. A belated confession by the real culprit, a junior of mine, who had been caught red-handed in a second attempt, his first having proved so successful.

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PLEASE WRITE CLEARLY. P.S., 1/8/36

YOU SUPPLY the BRAINS
MAXALDING DOES THE REST

A gentleman, aged 40, writes from Canada: "May 28, 1936. If you consult your files you will find that

24 YEARS AGO I TOOK YOUR COURSE

—certainly I feel as if I were in the twenties and to-day have as good, if not better muscular development and control than in 1930 or earlier—chest 48 in. and waist 34 in.; but I pay little attention to measurements as it is the muscle-control, tone and flexibility that seem to me to be more important once one has acquired a well-built physique.—I am a lawyer of a legal family—and have contributed a great deal to the Law Magazines—, I mention this to show that my work is of a very exacting kind and calls for sustained mental concentration. My life has had more than its share of difficulties and sorrows of one kind and another—but as I relax—I throw it all out of my mind and amuse myself practising some of the Maxalding movements.—Barring accidents, if

MAXALDING

is persisted with, one cannot see why an excellent physical development and abounding health cannot be retained until old age."

THE ILLUSTRATION IS FROM AN UN-RETOUCHED PHOTOGRAPH of the writer of the letter from which the above extracts are taken, supplied by him and published already in 1930. I have permission to give his name and address to any Member of the Medical or Legal professions. A. M. SALDO.

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You're Telling Us!

In search of a pint of old and mild

UNCLE JOE was sitting on the upturned wheelbarrow at the foot of his cabbage patch, moodily sucking his corn-cob pipe and idly turning a fishing hook, some strands of silk and a cat's whisker into a Sally Brown trout fly. The silence, broken by only an occasional match rasping on the seat of the Great Man's trousers as he made yet another attempt to light his pipe, became intolerable; we ventured a remark.

"I'm thinking of the Pilgrim Mothers," said Uncle Joe at last. "You know, we hear a lot about them thar Pilgrim Fathers, but nary a word about the Pilgrim Mothers. Yet they had the greatest struggle. They had not only to put up with the same hardships, but also they had to put up with the Pilgrim Fathers."

WE ADMITTED that was so, always had been so, and might even have been funny when it was first thought of, but we wondered why our honourable ancestor should bring it up at this late date.

"Well, it was that letter from Mrs. Hartshorne, of Manchester, appealin' to me that started it," said the ancient. "You remember, she said 'Will Uncle Joe tell me why a man sitting smoking with half a dozen ashtrays within reach must allow his cigarette ash to fall over his clothes or on to the carpet? Why, when he has tramped all over the muddy garden, must he decide to change his boots in the bathroom after walking all through the house? Why, when he goes for a stroll in the evening, saying he won't be long, must he stay out till nearly midnight? Why, when you buy white fish for his dinner, must he say he would have preferred salmon? Why, when you have just bought him a new packet of razor blades, must he decide to go to the barber's shop for a shave? Why on earth will he persist in singing "While you live, live in clover, for when you're dead, you're dead all over," when the final demand note for the income tax comes in? . . .'

"I jest can't understand these married folks that think the marriage lines are trenches and a wedding ring is something to fight in," said Uncle Joe pensively. "Now look at me and ma; you never hear us fightin'. It isn't worth while; she always wins, anyway."

THE SAGE struck another match, puffed at his pipe, and then, shaking the half-finished Sally Brown trout fly in our direction, began again: "The secret of happy marriage is . . ."

"Joe," said a voice that split the thundery atmosphere like jagged lightning.

"Yes, ma," said Uncle Joe.

"Did you leave your rubber fishing waders on the stove to dry?"

"Yes, ma."

"Then you'd better come and scrape them off."

"Yes, ma."

And so, gentle readers, we stole away into the scenery without hearing any more on the subject of marriage. We always believed that his wife has been striving, like many another woman, to love the man she married, but, even so, he has our sympathy. For in the words of the classics she not only expects the worst, but also makes the worst of it when it happens. We might even say, as the Irishman said of "the grand lady" at Dublin Castle, "She has all the qualities of the kitchen poker without its occasional warmth."

Let us turn from the critic on the hearth to the wonders of science. Having heard from Lowell Thomas that an American has trained a goldfish to slip with a line into the gullets of game fish and to slither out through their gills, stringing the desired number together, tying a knot in the line, and then sending air bubbles to the surface to tell its master to draw in the catch, we have taught our pet canary such a sweet song that when we put him by the riverside to sing, we just have to walk along the bank with the net lifting out trout and salmon as they come to the surface to listen open-mouthed.

WHILE WE ARE telling tall stories, there's Miss K. B. Durrant to be considered. She has something to say about watches. "Not the night-watchman or the lads who keep watch on the seven seas," she says, "but the 'tickers' we use when the management doesn't provide a clock to show that it is opening time. For many years I have had a small wristlet watch which has behaved like a perfect lady, e.g., sometimes a little fast, sometimes a little slow, but, having recently acquired a companion, a hundred per cent. he-man pocket watch, she is showing signs of temperament.

"When I put them side by side on a table they invariably stop within fifteen minutes. Separate them and they start with the greatest enthusiasm; and so it goes on. Is it that when they are near to each other they forget the mundane job of keeping time to make faces at each other? They certainly 'hold' hands."

We suggest that this story, entitled "Hands Across the Dial" or "A Ticking-off in Rhyme Saves Time," told in "prose or worse" to the accompaniment of zither, cornet, and/or trombone, would put anybody to sleep; but we hesitate to offer the obvious explanation of this phenomena for somebody might believe us.

IF WE PROMISE to tell you a story told to us by Joseph Prichard, who has written to us from the great, wide open spaces of Chorlton-cum-Hardy, to point out how superior he feels because he lives in a city (Manchester?) you must agree that we should not be held responsible for its affects.

With their cameras at the ready

Still, to return to Joe Prichard and his belief that countrymen have no fine feelings. It appears that he was having a glass of milk at the Hen and Chickens at Puddleton-on-the-Marsh when in wandered "a horny-handed son of the soil" in search of a pint of old and mild "to steady his nerves."

"When he had settled himself," writes Mr. Prichard, "one of the gaffers sitting around the empty firegrate said: ''Eard you'd a fire down your way this mornin', Bill.' 'Ai, that we 'ad,' was the answer. 'Tes this way: Master goes with the missus down to market intendin' to pay insurance which had lapsed. While he were away young Ted sees one of them thar brown owls nestin' in barn. Off he goes tryin' to take its picture with that thar new-fangled light of his. The whole thing explodes, sets fire to barn, and afore we knaws about it t'old place is burned out, and master not back from the insurance place.' Silence greeted this recital, possibly showing sympathy, when the gaffer said: 'Yes, yes, but did young Ted git 'is picture? It 'ud be mighty interestin'.'"

AND THAT, suggests Mr. Prichard, shows how inhuman country people can be. To us it means just the opposite; fancy any "old gaffer" showing interest in photography. We expect retired generals, moony old maids, and bright young school ma'ams to crawl around the countryside with their cameras "at-the-ready"; but we expect the country man to take down his shot-gun if there's anything of interest laying eggs in his barn. It seems we were wrong.

CONVERSATION PIECE by Morley Whymper.

First farmer: "This rain'll soon be bringing things out of the ground, Garge."

Garge: "I hopes not, my old woman has been down there only six months."

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Solution Next Week

CLUES DOWN

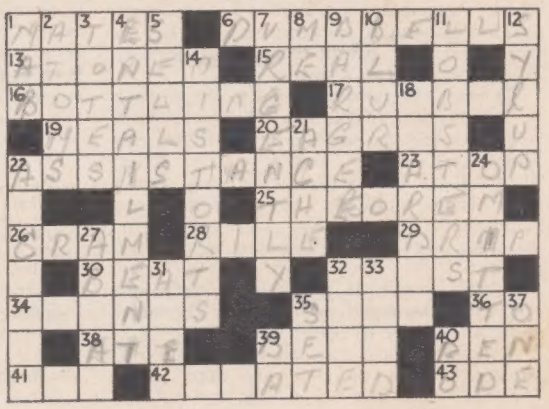
1. Queen of the fairies.
2. Minute portions.
3. Race-course features.
4. Tame linnet (anagram).
5. Provides for payment.
7. Must be accomplished without delay.
8. I am in 19.
9. A sailor of a sort.
10. To render indistinct.
11. Crustaceous creatures.
12. Treacly stuff.
14. Gives something a twist.
18. A lion may be this in its 40.
21. Painful sensation.
22. He would not 26.
24. Left out intentionally or inadvertently.
27. At right angles to the vessel's length.
31. The Dean turns to port.
32. Attention.
33. A servant from behind.
35. To place.
37. Quite singular.
39. So said Mary's lamb.
40. Perform.

C	E	R	E	M	O	N	I	A	L	■	F	L	I
A	V	E	R	■	E	S	T	A	B	L	I	S	H
S	E	P	A	R	A	T	I	O	N	■	O	B	O	E
T	R	I	■	L	■	S	M	E	A	R	S	■	V
I	G	N	O	B	L	E	■	I	■	N	I	T	R	E
G	R	E	B	E	■	G	■	C	A	N	D	O	U	R
A	E	R	I	F	O	R	M	■	B	E	■	C	B	■
T	E	S	T	A	C	E	O	U	S	■	S	K	Y	■
I	N	■	L	E	S	T	■	E	A	T	■	B	■	■
O	■	A	L	A	S	■	I	N	C	A	■	■	A	■
N	E	A	T	■	N	■	A	N	T	E	R	I	O	R

Solution to last week's puzzle

CLUES ACROSS.

1. These may be in teams.
6. Silent sound-makers apparently.
13. Reparation made.
15. Not a figment of the imagination.
16. Putting in tight places presumably.
17. Modified plant secretion with many uses.
19. One who 38 would require these.
20. Such bores may be frightful.
22. Tices an ass (anagram).
23. On high we may suppose.
25. Other me for something to be proved.
26. To crowd or force in.
28. To annoy or irritate.
29. Drop by drop.
30. Time measure for the band.
32. Strong box.



34. Tendencies.
35. Settled completely, or perhaps only in part.
36. Merely half tone.
38. Act of consumption located in 42.
39. A Scottish stream.
40. Possibly a cosy corner.
41. River in campaign.
42. Apparently untimed, but refers to the knobs.
43. This is in mode.

B148 502

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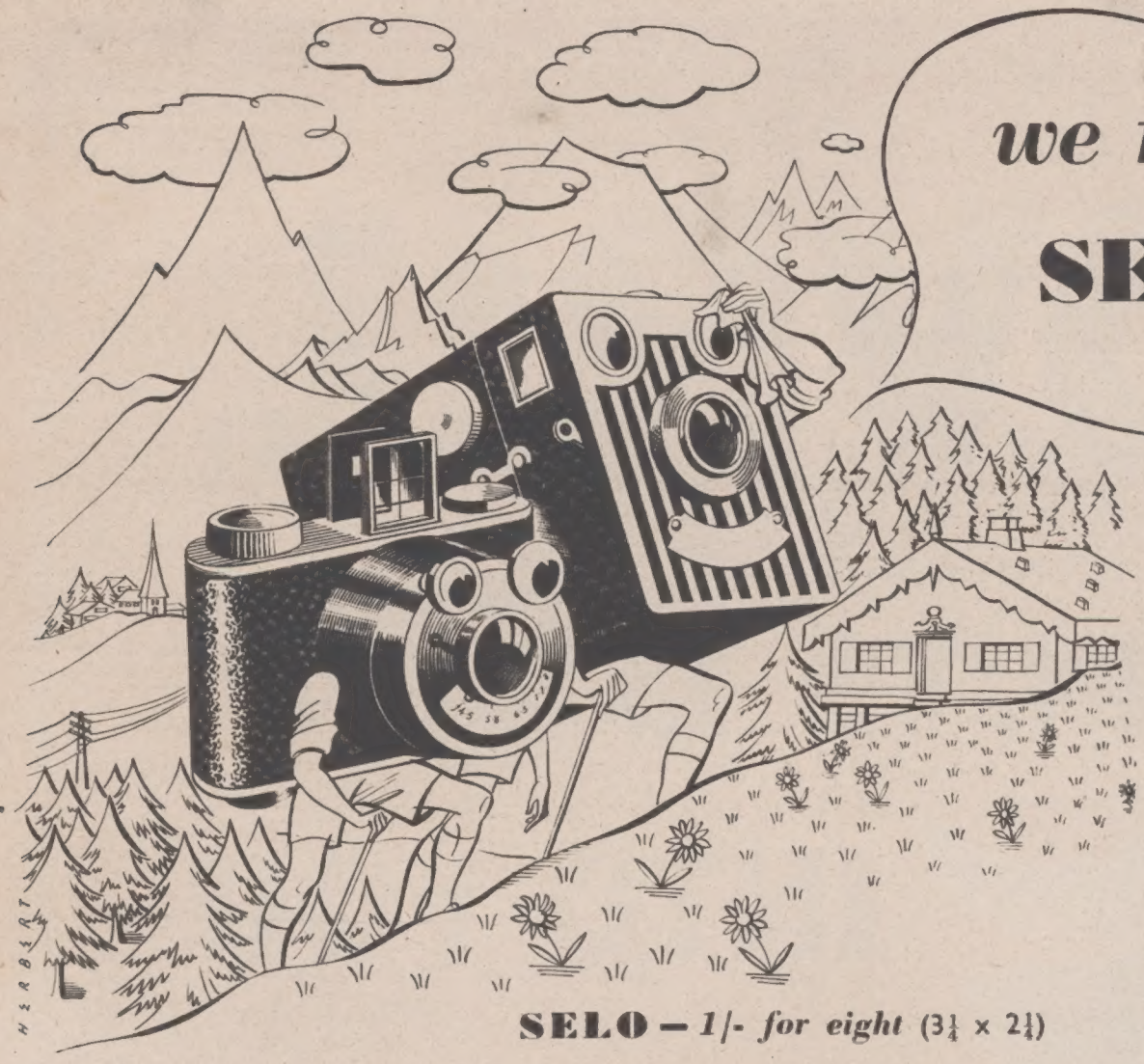

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